

University of Alberta

Death and Selfhood in Heidegger's *Being and Time*

by

İtir Güneş



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2001



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-69429-1

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: İtir Güneş

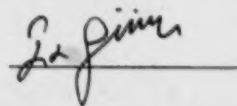
Title of Thesis: Death and Selfhood in Heidegger's *Being and Time*

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 2001

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.



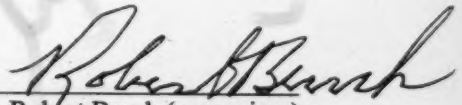
Onur Sk. 15/6
Maltepe, Ankara
Türkiye

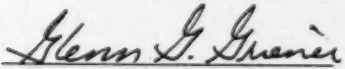
July 12, 2001

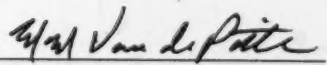
University of Alberta

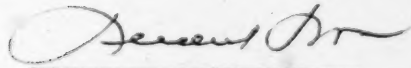
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Death and Selfhood in Heidegger's *Being and Time* submitted by Itr Güneş in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

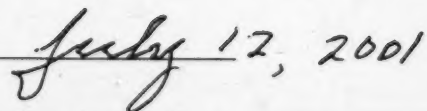

Dr. Robert Burch (supervisor)


Dr. Glenn G. Griener


Dr. Margaret M. Van de Pitte


Dr. Leendert P. Mos

Thesis Approval Date:

 July 12, 2001

ABSTRACT

This thesis is mainly an explication of the significance of the notions of death and selfhood in Heidegger's seminal book *Being and Time*. Some alternative approaches to death and selfhood as well as the interpretations of P. Edwards and R. Solomon are evaluated. Heidegger's existential ontological analysis of Da-sein is explained in the context of his philosophy of being, and the importance of an authentic understanding of death in the process self-constitution is emphasized. An interpretation of Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial* is provided to exemplify and further clarify the meaning of Da-sein's struggle to be an authentic self.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key to Abbreviations

CHAPTER 1: The Philosophical Question of Death and Selfhood	1
(1.1) Significance of the Question of Death	1
(1.2) Various Approaches to Death	3
(1.3) The Existential Ontological Conception of Death and Selfhood	4
(1.4) Heidegger's Existential Ontology	9
(1.5) Heidegger and His Commentators	11
CHAPTER 2: Common Criticisms and Misinterpretations of Heidegger:	13
(2.1) Paul Edwards	13
(2.1.1) "Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique"	13
(2.1.1.1) The Alleged Loneliness of Death	
(2.1.1.2) The Untransferability of Death	16
(2.1.1.3) Being-Toward-Death	18
(2.1.2) "Heidegger and Death as "Possibility""	21
(2.2) Robert Solomon's "Death Fetishism, Morbid Solipsism"	26
(2.3) General Remarks	33
CHAPTER 3: Heidegger's Philosophy of Being	35
(3.1) Da-sein and the Question of Being	35
(3.2) The Necessity of the Retrieval of the Question of Being	38
(3.3) How to Formulate the Question of Being	40
(3.4) Da-sein's Being-in-the-World	46

(3.4.1) Being-in-the-World	47
(3.4.2) Spatiality of Da-sein	50
(3.4.3) World	51
(3.5) Being-with-Others and Inauthenticity of Da-sein	52
(3.6) Angst: A Path from Inauthenticity to Authenticity	58
(3.6.1) Angst About <i>Nothing</i>	58
(3.5.2) The Null Ground of Da-sein's Being	59
(3.6.3) Angst and Da-sein's Individualization	60
 CHAPTER 4: Da-sein's Being as "Death-in-Life"	 63
(4.1) Death and Da-sein as an Interpretative Being	63
(4.2) Death as an Event vs. Death as an Ontological Phenomenon	64
(4.3) The Hidden Meaning of the Phenomenon of Death	66
(4.4) Da-sein's Authentic Being-Toward-Death	76
(4.5) Call of Conscience	81
 CHAPTER 5: Kafka and Heidegger: A Philosophical Kinship	 87
(5.1) The Trial	87
(5.2) Nothingness of Being	101
 CHAPTER 6: Final Considerations	 103
(6.1) The Issue of Death	103
(6.2) Critique of Subjectivity	107
 Bibliography	 112

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

WORKS BY HEIDEGGER

- BT *Being and Time*
- IM *Introduction to Metaphysics*
- KPM *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*
- MFL *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*

WORKS BY OTHER AUTHORS

- CSC "The Critique of Subjectivity and Cogito in the Philosophy of Heidegger,"
Paul Ricoeur
- DF "Death Fetishism, Morbid Solipsism," Robert Solomon
- DII "Death of Ivan Ilych," Leo Tolstoy
- DRB "Da-sein's Responsibility for Being," Richard A. Cohen
- DRH "Destructive Retrieve and Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Being and
Time," Joseph J. Kockelmans
- EBJ *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy*, Emil Fackenheim

- FK *Franz Kafka, Wilhelm Emrich*
- FrK *Franz Kafka, Günther Anders*
- HBT *Heidegger and Being and Time, Stephen Mulhall*
- HEM *Heidegger and the Essence of Man, Michel Haar*
- LWVC *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle, Ludwig Wittgenstein*
- MH *Metaphysics and Historicity, Emil L. Fackenheim*
- T *The Trial, Franz Kafka*
- TLP *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein*

Chapter1: The Philosophical Question of Death and Selfhood

(1.1) Significance of the Question of Death

The question of death is not merely a scientific, metaphysical or theoretical issue but one which concerns all human beings. It is a question with which some of us are at times preoccupied whereas others just try to put it off. But every person, at least once in her lifetime, thinks of death and wonders about it. What makes it the focus of such attention? Why is it that we humans cannot avoid thinking about death and asking questions about its nature? I think the answer to these questions is not extraordinarily complicated. The reason why we wonder about death is essentially *our awareness of this fact* that we are all mortal creatures and sooner or later will die. All things in nature come into being and pass away, animate and inanimate alike, but only we humans are aware of our mortality and think of our death before it is imminent—not as just one fact among others, but as the “ultimate” fact of our existence.

In our daily life death is not far away from us. Everyday people die and other people, who have not yet tasted death, observe it and talk about it. Even though death appears as a “fact” that happens only to others (not to us), we all know that one day it is going to happen to us—but not today, not now. Even though we think that now we are alive and living through thick and thin, we cannot free ourselves completely from the thought of death and its reality and inevitability.

However, there is another way in which death affects us and enters into our vision. It is the death of a beloved. We may be afraid of death because it is the termination of our presence in the world, yet it also reminds us of itself by taking loved ones away from us. Probably we first learn about death upon the death of someone close to us. For the fact that the person we love was here yesterday and with us, but today he is *not* and he will not be anymore, seems simply absurd. Such an event is a real shock that shakes us from deep inside and forces us to ponder the meaning of life, human existence and the point of our existence. We ask: Why are we here? Why are people dying? Why bother living-through all the unpleasantness of life

if we are going to die one day and everything we have accomplished and lived for will in the end turn into dust and ashes?

In this study I will not offer answers to such questions—for the first and second questions go beyond the realm of our understanding, experience and knowledge. The third one is an existential question the ultimate answer to which, I think, lies in each and every person's heart.¹ Rather, I am interested in the question of death as an existential ontological question, which requires an examination not only of the meaning and significance of the universal phenomenon of death, but also of human existence and selfhood. For this purpose I will explicate Heidegger's views on human existence and death in his book *Being and Time*.

The consciousness of death as an unknown and unavoidable phenomenon (for it is not something we can "live through"), makes us wonder about its "essence" and what may or may not come after. Yet, this concern with death is ultimately not an indifferent, impartial questioning of an objective fact, but an *existential* concern. It is a question mainly about "my death" as that which marks the end of my own worldly being as I know it. But that question is by no means something that we can consider in isolation from the question of the being of human being as such. As Heidegger says, death belongs to human beings essentially. Some philosophers (e.g. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §375, 376) have attempted to give an account of the necessity of death in general in nature. However, we shall consider the question of death to be a question specifically of human death as an existential ontological concern, and therefore, a question about human existence as such. Dealing with this question, moreover, we may acquire some understanding of the depths of human being in its being.

The problem of human death has also been one of the fundamental and widely discussed philosophical questions in the history of philosophy. From the ancient Greek to the modern era, philosophers have discussed issues having to do with the essence, meaning or meaninglessness of death and with the question of our proper

¹ Philosophers like Albert Camus define human existence as a never-ending struggle but it seems to me that still the crucial question remains: why should I persist in this struggle? I think that every human being should encounter and answer this question herself.

attitude towards death. The issue that dominates most of the Ancients is that of immortality, and the arguments for or against the immortality of the soul. In contrast, the existential ontological concern is not about whether we shall in this or that way survive the demise of our physical bodies, but how the awareness of death enters into and structures our present existence. Thus an existential ontological investigation of death deals with the related topics of mortality, selfhood, and human existence as they relate to the human condition.

(1.2) Various Approaches to Death

What is the meaning and place of death in Heidegger's conception of death? Death, according to him, is not just an event, or just a limit, but a "boundary situation" that enters into and structures self-constitution. Death is not just any limitation, but the ultimate limit of human "existence."² Awareness of death is crucial, since it is the awareness of the final limit of one's own existence, it transforms one's self and perception of life radically. The correct attitude towards death is not oblivion, but confronting it authentically (i.e. as something which is mine)—in and through which one understands the whole of his condition. Hence, death, from this point of view, cannot be a matter of indifference or just a fearful or blissful event. On the contrary, mortality is essential to human existence and humans' awareness of this essential feature plays an important role in shaping one's own life and selfhood.

There are some other philosophical approaches to the issue of death that should be distinguished from Heidegger's with regard to the issues of whether or not death enters into and ontologically structures human existence, and the right attitude towards one's own death.³ Some philosophers argue that human death is just a physical fact and therefore, merely a limitation on human existence that marks its closure. Death,

² "Existence" is understood as the human mode of existence as opposed to material, spiritual, etc. existence. That is, as each self understands its own existence in and through its own existence of itself and its situation.

³ Despite the distinction I made among three approaches to death, I contend that it is possible to find various commonalities in these approaches. I have identified those approaches to compare and contrast with Heidegger for the purpose of distinguishing his position.

from this perspective, seems like an event which is essentially external to human existence. The occurrence of death is a happy or unhappy event because it is the end of one's presence on earth and pursuit of life.

A second attitude is that of indifference in the face of death. According to this, death is nothing, so it should cause neither fear nor anything like happiness. Since no one can experience one's own death, one should not feel sorrow at it. Therefore, the best attitude is to live one's life as if there is no death.

Apart from these attitudes, there is a tendency to praise death that can be seen especially in some religions. According to them death is the ultimate salvation from all the evils of this world and gives human beings the opportunity to live eternally in the other world. God is just and does not allow injustice to prevail; so, the afterlife will be the best possible condition for humans. Death, as the commencement of this new life, is something we should celebrate—not curse or be afraid of.

All these perspectives on death are based on and follow from different ontological assumptions and conceptions of selfhood. The disagreement on the issue of death is one, but an important, upshot of those more basic philosophical presuppositions. Hence, a particular conception of death is in close connection with a correlated understanding of selfhood and human existence—each of which cannot be discussed in isolation from the other.

To recapitulate, the main aim of this study is to explicate and defend the Heideggerian version of the existential ontological conception of death and selfhood. To this end, I will provide an interpretation of Martin Heidegger's understanding of death in relation with selfhood as he argues for it in his seminal book *BT*. Before this, first I will explicate the existential ontological understanding of selfhood and death to provide a background for understanding Heidegger's thesis.

(1.3) The Existential Ontological Conception of Death and Selfhood

According to the existential ontological approach, as Karl Jaspers articulates, death is a "boundary situation," that is, an *a priori* limit of human "existence," not

merely an event or property. The basis of this thesis is to be found in the following claims. The question of human being is a question of selfhood, where to be is to be a self. Yet self cannot be defined as a metaphysical substance, a bundle of perceptions, or even a creation of God. To be a self, the self must be self-constituting such that ultimately there is no distinction between human being and human acting.

To say that self is self-constituting means that self *cannot* be a product of something other than itself. In this way, the thesis of self-constitution opposes empiricist, rationalist and religious theses—indeed, any thesis which pictures self as a mere product of something “other,” be that God, society, history, language, etc. The empiricist thesis is rejected because it claims that self is the product of empirical conditions and circumstances and so reduces the human self to, as David Hume claims, a bundle of perceptions. The problem with this account is that it forgets that in order to be able to look at oneself and say that, “self is a bundle of perceptions,” self must transcend the bundle of perceptions. Therefore, Hume forgets that there must be an “I” that does the looking in the first place—as a philosopher awakened from his “dogmatic slumber” thanks to Hume’s empiricism, Immanuel Kant came to realize. The rationalist thesis promotes the conception of self as the product of fixed, given human nature. According to this, human self is a substance that inherently contains certain concepts and ideas in itself that determine its nature and whatness. This view recognizes self as a subject but claims that self is a product of a ready-made metaphysical nature. For this reason, Descartes, for example, proceeds directly from the self-certainty of the *ego cogito* to the subject as *res cogitans*. But it cannot show how this substance (*res*) could give the self its self-identity—that is, it overlooks the fact that what makes properties of a subject (its thoughts) the properties of a subject is not that they inhere in a substance but they are the subject’s thoughts intrinsically, which originally belong to the subject’s self-conscious experience. The religious view mainly assumes that humans are creation of God and their nature is given and determined by God’s will.⁴ What is missing in these approaches is the idea of self-

⁴ Since Heidegger’s criticism is of Western metaphysics in *BT*, it may be better to limit the issue of religion only to the theological metaphysical view according to which, human beings are God’s creation and their selves are determined by a fixed human nature given by God.

constitution, that is, the proper appreciation of the role that self plays in the process of its own self-constitution. These views conceive self basically as a stable or given something that does not itself play a role in the constitution of itself. In contrast with them, the existentialist approach holds to the view that self cannot be produced by something other than itself. But how is that possible? Does self have unrestricted power to be whatever it wants to be?

In response to these questions, the existential ontological affirms that human being is neither simply a product of external conditions, nor a pure self-making. Despite existentialist view's emphasis on self-constitution, it does not rely on the presumption that there is no prior structure and no limits to selfhood, since a completely unstructured self is not a self at all. Self-constitution is possible, as E. L. Fackenheim asserts, in relation to limiting conditions and situations. Humans' self-constitution always takes place in situations; that is, human beings ordinarily find themselves in natural, historical, political, etc. situations. Self-constitution cannot be freed from these situations, rather, it "must be understood as limited by a situation which is other than it, and which still enters into its internal constitution; and nevertheless finite self-making must *be* a self-making, not the mere product of external events" (MH 48). The way this dialectical relation works depends on the situation in which a person finds himself and the way the facts enter into his self-constitution. Self is constituted through a dialectical relation between self and the (natural, historical, ontological) boundaries that situate it; but these boundaries come to be the facts of one's self only when they enter into one's selfhood. Humans recognize these boundaries in and through their confrontation with them—in and through which they also constitute themselves. This means that a human being is neither a mere product of natural and historical forces, nor a purely autonomous self-creating being—it is

something more than a mere product, and yet as something less than a self-making. Instead of a self-constituting, it must rather be the accepting or choosing of something already constituted, and yet also not constituted, because the accepting or choosing is part of its essence (MH 83).

So, not only that human existence is possible in situations, but also the situations define and restrict the possibilities of being for them. That is to say, in any

case, in any situation human existence is always limited this or that way—which means that freedom cannot be defined as unrestricted power to choose anything one wills, but as freely choosing among the possibilities that are disclosed in one's own situation. Situations are positive limits within which we are what we are.

Yet, we must draw a distinction here. Historical, natural, political, etc. situations are variable and contingent, but there are some universal, *a priori* limits that constitute the ontological ground of the contingent situations, which are "boundary situations." Jean-Paul Sartre also suggests that even though there is not a universal essence of human nature, there is a universal *human condition*—which refers to all limitations that *a priori* determine worldly human existence ("Existentialism is A Humanism" 303). Aside from the contingent situations, there are some necessities of humans' existence in the world, which are not simply subjective or objective, but have both subjective and objective aspects. Since these necessary limitations, as Sartre articulates, are inevitable and recognizable everywhere, they are *objective*; and because they are lived, and are nothing if one does not freely choose and determine oneself in relation with them, they are *subjective*. To illustrate, death is a universal truth about human existence but it enters into one's selfhood only when the awareness of one's own mortality structures one's being and understanding. That is, the facts and boundaries enter into self as long as one appropriates and integrates them into one's selfhood.

Boundary situations in their turn cannot be understood as completely independent of natural and historical situations. One becomes conscious of boundary situations when she individually encounters them within her own historical/natural situation—such as, a permanent sickness, a natural disaster, the difficulties of old age through which she discovers the temporality, mortality and fragility of the human existence. In her encounter with the individual manifestation of a boundary situation one is faced the universal predicament of the human existence (MH 80). Death as an inevitable universal truth is a part of human condition, a boundary situation. Regardless of when and where one is born, everyone is destined to die. When, where and how of each person's death might be different, for they are tied to contingent

natural, historical, etc. situations. Yet, death as an unavoidable, universal human phenomenon is the ontological ground of the particular events of death—for the possibility of them lies in death's being an a priori structure of the human condition.

In self-choosing and self-constitution, the self which is chosen or constituted does not exist apart from and prior to the choice—for otherwise the self would be a readily available product, not the upshot of an essential choice (*MH* 84). But how is that possible? If self is self-constituting, then who is it that makes choices? If one does not want to make choices, does it mean that he does not have a self?

It is not the case that self is only when it chooses; rather, self already exists regardless of whether it makes choices or not for there is certainly no "selfless" human being. But since self is self-constituting, one's self is not separate from choosing. The self that recognizes itself as such and takes the responsibility of choosing (or makes its choices of its own) is, to employ the Heideggerian terminology, "authentic," and the self that does not recognize itself as such and does not take the responsibility of choosing is "inauthentic."

Two things must be made clear here: First, self-constituting is understood as a process in which the present is a point of integration where the past is appropriated and the future is projected. As Heidegger asserts, the present happening (as a historical happening) "is determined from the future, takes over what has been, and acts and endures its way through the *present*." (*IM* 47) That is, self does not leave the past behind and move forward to the future, but past, future and present intrinsically relate to one another. The future and past are not totalities of independent moments; they enter into each other and help to constitute the present. The past not only influences the future and the present conditions, but more importantly some of the past experiences are memorized, reintegrated into the present and reenacted in one's anticipation of the future. As Flaubert states, past is never past; the unity of past, present and future is a dynamic one which constantly integrates and reintegrates lived experiences. Therefore, self-constitution is a process of reintegrating and reenacting one's past and in and through which one makes sense of one's lived experience. This also means that self is historical not only because one finds oneself in the midst of a

historically changing world and conditioned by the events external to it, but also because self of lived experience as the process of self-determination is itself historical.

Second, for the philosophers who hold the thesis that self is self-constituting, the problem of the identity of self is *sui generis*, and not a version of the traditional problem of the objective identity of the things over time. Self is not a substance, an object (as Cartesian *res cogitans*), something present at hand that ensures the unity of one's experiences and self-identity throughout time—it does not need anything other than itself for its unity. Self is not an ego, the unchanging ground of our experience that gives meaning to them; instead, self itself is not other than lived experience. Hence, self is a process that constitutes meaning into the lived experience and itself is the source of self-identity, which is not external to the lived experience. In this account, the unity and self-identity of the self are explicable only in terms of lived experience.

The existential ontological approach provides a remarkably different perspective than the ones mentioned before. From this point of view, human existence does not have a essence prior to its existence, rather, its essence is defined and determined, according to philosophers like Sartre, by what it does, and for some others like Heidegger by not only what it does, but also and more importantly the way it interprets, makes sense of the world.

(1.4) Heidegger's Existential Ontology

Heidegger's philosophy as a whole and his version of the existential doctrine of self-constitution should also be distinguished from the subjectivist view according to which *cogito* is the first and the most distinct truth. According to the Cartesian view, man is the first ground (for "I am" is the most certain, undeniable truth), the center to which all the beings and entities are related. But this is possible only if we conceive the world as a picture that stands before us (CSC 68). It is humans who view the world, approach the entities, make use them, and more importantly represent those entities to themselves; it is man who faces the world, not that man *is faced by the*

world as it is for the Greeks (CSC 68). Truth lies in the certainty and objectivity of humans' representations. In this way this approach draws a sharp distinction between representations and the entities, inner and outer, objective and subjective. A rather important upshot of putting the human being in the center as the subject who views, represents, and makes use of the entities is to manipulate and control the world as a whole of which "technology is only a consequence, and a formidable consequence, of this man on the stage of his own representation" (CSC 69).

Heidegger's *BT*, from the beginning, displays a different origin to philosophy. The ontological existential inquiry does not start from Cartesian *cogito*, but with raising and retrieving the question of being. Therefore, the emphasis is not on *cogito*, the subject, but on the question and meaning of being, and the existential analysis of human existence is treated in the asking of the question of being. In this way, Heidegger's philosophy, by understanding human existence in relation with the question of being, offers a different conception of self. But, more importantly, what Heidegger does is, as Paul Ricoeur correctly points out, not a mere rejection of *cogito*, but is a *critique of the metaphysics that underlies it* (CSC 63). Hence, Heidegger's philosophy does not come with a better and more complete conception of subject, and does not address the problems within the subjectivist thinking. Instead, it provides a different perspective and is built upon different philosophical/ontological assumptions. It can be said that the basis of a new understanding of self is laid out in *BT* in which every step of analysis can be read as a move against the subjectivist point of view. While Heidegger, on the negative side, criticizes and rejects the subjectivist perspective, he, on the positive side, lays out the ontological basis for a new philosophy. In this respect, his analysis as a whole can be read as a philosophy of self in which *cogito* is no more in the center of universe—and is not the most certain first philosophical truth. Rather, its being needs to be analyzed and properly understood.

In Heidegger's account the phenomenon of death plays a crucial role—for death is considered as a boundary situation; but it, more than that, is the *ultimate* situating limit of one's existence, awareness of which discloses possibilities of one's being. Heidegger suggests that one of the central characteristics of the being of human

being (among other more fundamental things like care, being-in-the-world) is being-toward-death which means the disclosure of death as an essential part of human reality (as a possibility), and not just a fact among other facts. Death is inherent to the being of human existence, awareness of which enters into and shapes one's own selfhood. The present thesis is motivated by the idea that Heidegger's view (whose legitimacy will get clearer only in the course of the discussion) provides an adequate understanding of death and worldly human existence.

(1.5) Heidegger and His Commentators

Heidegger's account of death in *BT* and the meaning he discloses in death have been a constant topic of discussion among commentators. Given that it has been the focus of such attention, it is not surprising to find a wide variety of interpretations of this issue in secondary literature. Yet, the interpreters often offer somewhat incompatible readings of Heidegger's text from various points of view in such a way that they are not only, from time to time, in disagreement about the meaning of certain passages and certain expressions in *BT*, but also sometimes read completely contradictory meanings and theses into the text. Most of these interpretations suffer mainly from two general failures or shortcomings: First, they fail to read Heidegger's particular arguments and assertions with regard to the subject of death in the context of his philosophy, i.e. they isolate them from their context and regard them as single arguments which are independent of the rest of the text. Hence, those comments fail to see the "logic" through which the reasoning of the text, as well as the particular arguments, proceeds. Second, they do not pay enough attention to the way Heidegger defines and makes use of the concepts. "Possibility," "death," "non-relational," and Heideggerian terms like "being-toward-death" are only some of those commonly misunderstood concepts. To put it differently, these concepts are not understood as they are defined and used in the text, and as they are articulated in particular arguments, but with their daily usage or as they are used in traditional philosophical

texts. Either of these two common errors could be easily avoided through a more careful and sympathetic reading of the text.

I suggest that in order fully to comprehend Heidegger's views on the subject of death, and to render a fair interpretation of his theses, we should examine this issue in the context of his project of fundamental ontology. To this end, a brief look at the way Heidegger raises and discusses the question of being may prove helpful. In virtue of the large quantity of secondary literature, it may be presumed that Heidegger's views are clearly understood and explicated; however, in the commentaries there are persistent and common misunderstandings that block a proper appreciation of Heidegger's theses. For this reason, in the next chapter I will provide, before explicating Heidegger's philosophy, a brief overview of most common criticisms and misinterpretations of Heidegger, and will show where commentators went astray—which may be useful to eliminate some common misunderstanding from the beginning and set the stage for a more adequate understanding of Heidegger's thesis on its own terms.

Chapter 2: Common Criticisms and Misinterpretations of Heidegger

Heidegger's conception of death has been both appreciated and harshly criticized by many commentators. However, it is possible to see many misunderstandings and misinterpretations in both sides. In this chapter I will consider the critiques of two commentators, Paul Edwards' and Robert Solomon's, which exemplify the most common misunderstandings of Heidegger's understanding of death.

(2.1) Paul Edwards

In his articles "Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique" and "Heidegger and Death as 'Possibility'," Paul Edwards criticizes different aspects of Heidegger's understanding of death as he explicates it in *BT*. In the former article he gathers his critiques under three headings: the alleged loneliness of death, the untransferability of death, and being-toward-death. The latter article is mainly a critique of Heidegger's understanding of death as a possibility. The thesis he defends in both articles is that Heidegger's claims about death are in fact trite remarks that exemplify an eccentric but perverse use of language, and do not make any contribution to human knowledge. I will discuss each of his criticisms to show at what points Edwards' interpretation of Heidegger is ill-founded.

(2.1.1) "Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique"

(2.1.1.1) The Alleged Loneliness of Death

In his article "Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique" Edwards sets out by criticizing some Heideggerian commentators like John Wild who defend the "Heideggerian" doctrine that "all human beings die alone." Edwards contends that this claim does not say anything new, but creates only an illusion of doing so with an eccentric usage of language. He notes that Heidegger himself does not use the

German word 'allein' for dying alone but prefers some other expressions that make the same point, for example, he constantly says that "death is Da-sein's non-relational possibility."⁵ However, Edwards asserts that even though it is possible to interpret dying alone in three different ways, Heidegger's claim, understood in any of the senses, is not original. We can interpret it, first, as dying alone in the absence of any human beings, (that is, physical loneliness). Second, it is dying away from loved ones; to illustrate, someone, despite the presence and care of doctors and nurses, dies alone in a hospital room if there are no close friends or family members that take care of the patient (i.e., psychological loneliness). The third sense of "dying alone" Edwards mentions is not clear; he contrasts it with dying together with other people. Taking drugs in a party and have the "golden strike" together with one's friends is dying together, undergoing death synchronically with others in near proximity. In this context dying alone may possibly be expressed as social loneliness, that is, experiencing or performing something alone in the crowd. Edwards points that all these definitions apply only to particular cases which do not explicate the phenomenon of human death in its universality. However, he argues, by saying that "everyone dies alone," Heideggerians equate the term "dying alone" with "dying," and in this way, makes it

logically impossible for a person to die and not to die alone. If "alone" had some additional content, it would be possible to describe what it would be like for a person to die without dying alone; but as the Heideggerians use these words, such a description is not possible (165).

Edwards and some commentators he mentions misunderstand Heidegger's point about death's being a non-relational possibility and interpret it as an entity or an event Da-sein "experiences" or "lives through" alone. However, such an assertion does not tell anything special about death—for we can possibly be alone in many of our deeds and experiences, like having a dinner, taking a walk, drawing a picture, etc. So, it seems to me that the sentence "Everybody dies alone" in any of the three sense

⁵ Heidegger uses the term "Da-sein" (meaning "there-to be") for human existence instead of 'man' and 'human existence.' The reasons for his usage of the term will be explained in Section 3.1 in the context of his philosophy of being.

Edwards mentions does not say anything unique about death. Besides, as Edwards suggests, dying alone is not a universal phenomenon and therefore does not say anything about the essence of the phenomenon of death. But, is it really Heidegger's own thesis?

The answer is "no." I think that when Heidegger says that death is the non-relational possibility of one's being and that one faces the possibility of one's own death alone, neither does the term "death" refers to one's moment of death, nor does "non-relational" mean being alone in any of the senses Edwards lists. Instead, "death" should be understood as an existential ontological term, which refers to *the constant possibility of one's own death*, i.e. death is a possibility for Da-sein at every moment of its existence. To say that death is the non-relational possibility of Da-sein means that when Da-sein faces the truth that it is essentially a mortal being, it has a limited amount of time to live and death is the constant possibility (the possibility of impossibility) of its being, all daily concerns about the work, status, salary increase, etc. lose their meaning. Da-sein, as a being who cares and is concerned about its very being, sees that what is more important than all these particular matters is its being and it should itself make the decisions about how to live its own life. In such an encounter, Da-sein cannot make decisions directed by simply altruistic and/or social motives, and is not concerned about what people will think about its actions and choices, but sees that it is completely alone when it comes to make the decision about its own life and being. In this encounter, Da-sein understands that all the possibilities of its being are only its own, and it is alone responsible from every choice it makes. Death, since it puts off all other daily concerns and urges Da-sein to make the decision about its own life alone, is the non-relational possibility of being. In the face of Da-sein's encounter with its own mortality, all relations with people and all other concerns become invisible. So, interpreting Heidegger's thesis simply as "Da-sein is alone at the moment of its death" is not only far from reflecting Heidegger's point (for in fact he is not talking about one's moment of death), but also a seriously misleading claim for such an interpretation may easily lead to a misunderstanding of Heidegger's thesis. Edwards' following remark is a case in point: since one must die alone, if a

Heideggerian is about to die, he should not send for his family and friends (165-66). From this Edwards concludes that this Heideggerian thesis does not make any sense and is in conflict with our commonsense and practice—which, according to Edwards, shows that Heidegger's thesis is empty.

Edwards is right in pointing out that in all three senses of the proposition, dying alone applies only to particular cases. However, as I tried to show above, the way he interprets Heidegger's point is problematic which leads him to misunderstand Heidegger's arguments. This serious misinterpretation of Edwards clearly proves that a proper understanding of the main Heideggerian notions is a must for a fair interpretation and assessment of Heidegger's arguments.

(2.1.1.2) The Untransferability of Death

The second Heideggerian thesis Edwards criticizes in this article is Heidegger's argument that no one can represent anyone else before death, for death is the ownmost possibility of one's being that no one can replace someone else in dying.⁶

Edwards maintains that Heidegger's argument can be briefly expressed in two sentences. First one is that "the death a person dies is his and not somebody else's" (169). He argues that this is, if not meaningless, a trite remark, for it merely repeats what we all know. In daily life we never assume that we experience someone else's cramp or death, and know that we are experiencing our own experience. What Heidegger does, for Edwards, is just putting this commonsensical assumption into obtuse words, which, that, do not say anything new or interesting.

The second proposition Edwards suggests is that, "although one person can sacrifice himself for another, he cannot ultimately deliver him from his death" (169). That is, even if I can prevent one's death right now, still, ultimately no one can prevent someone else's death. Edwards comments that this is a trite remark too. Heidegger's

⁶ Heidegger uses "ownmost possibility" for the possibility of death meaning the possibility which is most one's own. This expression will be explained in Section 4.3. In general "ownmost" stands for Da-sein's possibilities or potentiality that intensifies the mineness of existence (HBT 117).

thesis, he argues, merely rephrases this commonsensical truth in an eccentric terminology that serves to make it look like a "deeper truth." But Edwards once again fails to see the point of Heidegger's argument. When Heidegger talks about the non-representational character of one's death, he is referring not only to the last moment of one's life, but also understands death as an *ontological, existential* phenomenon—that is, the universal human phenomenon of death as opposed to particular persons' death. Therefore, when he says that no one can represent others in death, he means that we are all mortal beings and have limited amount of time to realize ourselves and, in this sense, are always constantly dying. In one's encounter with the possibility of one's death, no one can accompany, replace or help another person. Everyone must face this truth oneself and make the decision about how to live one's own life oneself. Again, Heidegger is not referring merely to the moment of one's death.

When Heidegger says that, "death is always mine" he prefers such an expression solely for the purpose of distinguishing authentic understanding of death from an inauthentic one. In daily life people tend to understand death as something that belongs to or happens to other persons, but not to them. They think that all humans are mortal, everyone will die one day, but they usually overlook the point that it essentially belongs to themselves. Heidegger shows that this interpretation does not penetrate into the essence of the phenomenon of death and points out that death should be understood as a necessary human condition, as something belonging to our being, rather than just an event that we observe in the world. Humans are essentially mortal beings. A proper understanding of *this* universal truth is possible only when death is seen as something that belongs to me—in contrast with the normalizing view that "everybody will die one day." Hence, saying that it is common knowledge that all humans are mortal and that I am also going to die one day reflects simply the inauthentic average understanding of death.⁷ Heidegger explicitly states that everybody has such knowledge, but a proper authentic understanding of the mortality of one's being is rather rare—for it requires one to take control of one's own life (as much as possible) which is a quite difficult undertaking.

⁷ This is an inauthentic understanding for it also fails to consider death as a possibility, the constant possibility of my being.

From this we can infer that in his second proposition Edwards, assuming that Heidegger refers to the *existentiell* (factual, an observable particular instance of a phenomenon) event of death, reduces Heidegger's claim to a matter of Da-sein's relation to someone else's death. Heidegger would agree that ultimately no one can prevent another Da-sein's death, but this is not the point of his argument. According to him, what is of paramount importance and the best way to understand the essence of death is to have an authentic understanding of one's own death. It seems that Edwards misses the most crucial points in Heidegger's arguments regarding the essence of the phenomenon of death probably because he has not properly understood the main concepts of Heidegger's philosophy such as the distinction between existential-existentiell, authentic-inauthentic, meaning of Heideggerian concepts "possibility," "non-relational" etc. Edwards' misunderstanding of the text leads him the unfortunate conclusion that Heideggerian terminology is nothing but nonsense and eccentric, and accordingly, Heidegger's remarks are mere recapitulations of commonsense in a flamboyant and empty language.

(2.1.1.3) Being-Toward-Death

In the same article Edwards finally criticizes Heidegger's notion of being-toward-death. He summarizes Heidegger's remark that being-toward-death (the constant and inevitable possibility of death) is not something we procure for ourselves, but essentially belongs to Da-sein. He also adds that Heidegger expresses this claim, "all human beings are dying all the time" repeatedly in *BT* (177). Although seemingly there is no problem with Edwards' summary of Heidegger's thesis, his further explications, comments and interpretations are rather problematical. He asserts that Heidegger's argument could be expressed briefly as follows:

first, that human beings die, and, second, that unlike plants and animals they know and are, fugitively or non-fugitively, concerned about their death. The objection to that statement is not that it is false, but that it is platitude. Heidegger and his disciples announce this doctrine with the kind of fanfare that is usually reserved for a major contribution to human knowledge (179).

Edwards disregards the fact that Heidegger's objective in *BT*, as he explicitly states in the first pages, is not to contribute to human knowledge. He clearly says that what he is concerned with is the question of being which has been forgotten throughout the history of philosophy. It has been forgotten, for it is not an object, an entity, and hence not an object of knowledge—thus the understanding of being is also different from the understanding and knowledge of entities and events. Therefore, the kind of "knowledge" he seeks regarding *Da-sein* (who is "the pure expression of being") and the question of being in *BT* is remarkably different from what Edwards (probably) means by "contribution to human knowledge," i.e., knowledge of beings and/or events. Perhaps these two statements of Edwards are not wrong; but again, they are far from reflecting Heidegger's meaning since Edwards considers death as an event, not as an existential phenomenon. He further remarks that,

My death is something which has not yet taken place. My concern about my death occurs while I am alive and it precedes my death. It will be convenient to use the symbol " d_o " to refer to death in the ordinary sense and to use " c_d " to refer to knowledge and concern about one's death. We are told by Heidegger and his followers that "existentially" and "properly" understood, death is being-toward-death.... Heidegger and his followers propose to use the word "death" in a drastically new sense to mean c_d and not d_o . If anybody wishes to talk in this way, there is no law to stop him, but one can point out that it accomplishes nothing, or nothing of any value (179-80).

What Heidegger means by "death" is not the thought of death but either the end of one's own life and/or the constant possibility of death. In this sense, Heidegger does not as, Edwards argues, shift the meaning of the term drastically. By "being-toward-death" he indicates the disclosure of the ever-constant possibility of death of *Da-sein*. Humans are being-toward-death for as soon as one is born, her death is always a possibility of her being and, moreover she is constantly getting nearer and nearer to her moment of death. I think that the source of Edwards' misinterpretation of Heidegger's concept "being-toward-death" as "being toward the knowledge and concern about our being" is a quotation he takes from Heidegger. On page 179 he

quotes Heidegger, "It [being-toward-death] belongs essentially to Da-sein's thrownness, which reveals itself in a state-of-mind in one way or another (BT 295)."⁸

It seems that Edwards was misled by the translation of the German words 'Befindlichkeit' and 'der Stimmung' into English by Macquarrie and Robinson as 'state-of-mind,' and inferred that what Heidegger means by death or being-toward-death is a mental state, one's thought or concern about death. This is a grave misunderstanding of Heidegger, for 'Stimmung' literally means (besides 'frame or state of mind') 'tuning,' 'mood,' 'pitch' (which reflect Heidegger's usage of the term better) whereas 'Befindlichkeit' means "to be found"—which in BT refers not only to Da-sein's capacity to be affected by beings and the world, but also to the fact that the events, beings, etc. it encounters that *matter* to it in various ways over which it does not have absolute control (HBT 76).⁹ "Stimmung" stands for the *existentiell* instance of the phenomenon of "Befindlichkeit," which could be translated as "mood;" to illustrate, sorrow, happiness, etc., that Da-sein finds itself thrown into.¹⁰ In fact, the translation of "Befindlichkeit" as "state of mind," is not a good choice because of the technical usage of this term in philosophy of mind—for the original terms by no means refers to something that happens in our mind, a thought, or any sort of mental state. This misunderstanding (partly caused by the translation) led Edwards to interpret Heidegger's thesis in a completely wrong way. Heidegger remarks that Da-sein is always attuned and in a mood because "it is the fundamental existential mode of existence" (BT 137)—that is to say, Da-sein is *essentially attuned to the world*—the sentence Edwards quotes makes better sense.

⁸ In Heidegger's philosophy "thrownness" means Da-sein's finding itself in the world, or deliveredness to its there.

⁹ Heidegger uses the term "world" in most of the discussions in the ontic sense, that is, as "wherein a particular Da-sein might be said to exist," e.g., its work environment (HBT 46). The second sense of the term is ontological existential, "applying to the worldlihood of the world—which makes possible any and every ontic world" (HBT 46).

¹⁰ Heidegger himself defines "existentiell," as "ontic, i.e., being which is defined in its being by existence, its action and practices" (BT 13). Heidegger uses "thrownness" for Da-sein's moods for he thinks that Da-sein does not choose its moods but finds itself in them, in other words, it finds itself thrown into its moods.

(2.1.2) "Heidegger and Death as 'Possibility'"

In the second article "Heidegger and Death as 'Possibility,'" Paul Edwards argues that despite his followers' enthusiastic approval of Heidegger's thesis that "death is a possibility and not an actuality" which, W.A. Luijpen suggests, is "the correct attitude of man toward death," Heidegger's description of death as a possibility does not make any contribution to our understanding of death but displays just "a perverse play on words" (548-49). In this section I will show that Edwards' criticism is based upon a series of misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Edwards sums up Heidegger's thesis by stating that death is a "possibility," referring to "the alternatives which we can choose or, more precisely, which we know ourselves to be capable of choosing" (550). Therefore we, human beings, all know that we are able to choose between certain alternatives which are restricted in our choices by our thrownness and the situation we find ourselves in.

Having briefly stated Heidegger's point, Edwards criticizes Heidegger's usage of the term 'possibility.' He argues that,

[w]hen Heidegger talks about the 'possibility of the impossibility of every way of existing,' the word 'possibility' is altogether superfluous. What makes death a 'non-actuality' and thus a 'possibility' in his strange special sense is the impossibility of every way of existing. This is what the possibility is in the new sense *consists in*. The redundancy of 'possibility' in the phrase 'possibility of the impossibility of existing' is not at once apparent because the reader is apt to revert to the familiar sense in which 'possibility' is contrasted with probability or certainty (558).

At first these points may seem plausible. However, Edwards fails to understand the way death is mentioned as a possibility in *BT*. Death, as Heidegger argues, is a different kind of possibility. Other possibilities of my being may not be possible (or an alternative) at every moment. For example, a ten-year old person who has been playing tennis since she was four might be very good at it; even if she may not be good enough to play in Wimbledon right now, one of the possibilities of her being by learning to play tennis and working hard to improve her technique is that she *might* be a successful tennis player in the future. Or, a two-year old may or may not marry and have children in the future, both of them are his possibilities—even though

they are not alternative choices for him right now. But, unlike these, death is possible at each and every moment since one is born. A person, as soon as he was born, may die at any time. One may try to make probability calculations and refer to the statistical studies, but when it comes to face with one's own death, such technicalities will be irrelevant. No one can know that he is not the person who will be diagnosed a rare disease that kills the patient within two days. No one can predict that he will have a car accident today and immediately die on the spot, or be killed accidentally by a burglar, etc. Unlike most other possibilities of the being of Da-sein, death is always a possibility. In fact, this is the reason why Heidegger says that death is my "ownmost" (*eigenst*) possibility—the possibility that is "most my own." No other possibility is constantly close to human existence like death. Therefore, Heidegger's expression "the possibility of the impossibility" is not superfluous. On the contrary, it is correctly used to emphasize this crucial characteristic of death. Edwards says that,

The total absence of experiences and behavior is most emphatically not what we mean by 'possibility' in any of its ordinary senses and it is equally not what Heidegger himself meant when he introduced the word 'possibility' in his special sense to mean the actions or conduct or mode of life which a person may choose (558).

It is true that death is not like other possibilities that one would (normally) like to choose or realize. However this does not prevent it from being a possibility for Da-sein—not as a project, action, conduct, or mode of life, but as explained above, as the constant possibility of the impossibility of one's being. Yet, I think that what Heidegger wants to emphasize by saying that death is a possibility is that our being (as long as we exist) is so close to its opposite, to non-being that death is a constant possibility of our being. Even though we do not usually use the word 'possibility' to mean the absence of possibilities, it is the nature of death that it puts an end to all other possibilities of human existence. The fact that it is the end of one's life does not prevent it from being a constant possibility of one's existence (as long as one lives). I think that Heidegger argues that one's death is a possibility not because he changed the meaning of the term 'possibility' radically, but that it may happen each and every moment. In this sense, for Heidegger death is a completely different kind of possibility.

Heidegger's point is that death cannot be properly understood as an event that ends one's life, rather, it is an *a priori* necessity of Da-sein's being, a boundary situation. So, its being the constant possibility of my being is not an ontic (i.e., factual), but an ontological reality. Regardless of whether Da-sein is certain about the when of the moment of death or not, still, it is the ever-constant possibility of its being. Moreover, Da-sein is dying as long as it lives—it is constantly running out of time and getting closer to its moment of death. Whether we know the when of our death or not, it is true that we are constantly getting closer to the end of our lives. This is because of death's being a human condition that we are running out of time as long as we are. In this sense, death does not appear as any other ontic, factual possibility or just as an event.

Not only Edwards but some Heideggerian commentators too go astray when it comes to understanding what it means for death to be a possibility. Edwards, at that point, refers to the interpretations of some Heideggerian thinkers (like Demske, Wild, Schrag, Macquarrie and others), who, in a supposedly Heideggerian way, argue that death is the "capital possibility" of our being and/or the "culmination and crown of one's life." Heidegger would probably be in agreement with Edwards' criticisms of those commentators, for Heidegger at no point praises death as the most desirable and highest possibility of one's being. Moreover, in his philosophy there is no place for a biographical exposition of particular persons' attitudes toward death or at the moment of their death, nor does he make any suggestions about how one should act at the last moment of one's life. He does not make any judgments about what is the highest possibility and culmination of one's life because what is of the highest value varies from person to person. However, Heidegger's main concern is an ontological phenomenological analysis of human existence (not an overview or assessment of individuals' values or attitudes) which is needed to answer the most important question, the question of being. Therefore, some commentators of Heidegger are simply mistaken in assuming that when Heidegger mentions death as a possibility and anticipation of death, he means desiring and praising death. Rather, he takes death as a boundary situation, a limit of human existence whose essence should be correctly

understood in and through a phenomenological analysis of Da-sein. The anticipation of death, as he explicates in his phenomenology, cannot be the expectation of an event—it is the authentic awareness of one's own mortality.

Heidegger does not deny that the dying of others is an event that we observe in daily life—nor does he say that such an understanding of death is simply wrong. Rather, he argues that this is an inauthentic understanding of the phenomenon of death which is far from penetrating into the essence of death as a possibility, but reduces it to a mere event. Average understanding does not reveal the point that my existence can come to an end at any moment, I am constantly dying, i.e. running out of time and have limited time to realize myself. It gets it only as an event which is external to my being.

Even though Heidegger suggests as would be agreed by Edwards, after death we are no longer present in the world and for this reason there is a difficulty in doing any phenomenological exploration of the event of death, this is not Heidegger's main concern in *BT*. He does not do an analysis of the event of death but an existential ontological analysis of human existence and death as an *a priori* limit of it. The concern is to gain a proper understanding of human mortality, not of the knowledge of the experience of death, or what comes after it. Rather, he thinks that, regardless of how, when, and where one dies, an authentic understanding of the finitude which is essential to one's being gives a better understanding of one's being, in other words, one's life and possibilities of being. Of course, when one is dead, one is not; he is totally absent. But Heidegger's point is not about what happens after death but about how one can change the way one makes sense of life after one authentically understood the essence of the finitude of one's own being. In death one's being is not, (i.e., one is not present), but by death Heidegger does not mean merely imagining one's absence in the world, which will give a picture of the world from outside, an external point of view and treat Da-sein as an object that is present or non-present on earth. He points out that the nullity of existence in death is the impossibility of one's possibilities of being, that is, one's not-being-able-to-be-oneself.

Edwards, also argues that if the final conclusion Heidegger reaches is this, it does not contribute to our understanding of death, for it is commonsensical knowledge that after death we will disappear and our existence will come to an end. He asserts that this is not an original discovery; in fact, this is what we all know. What makes his philosophy so appealing to most readers is his eccentric yet "perverse" usage of language. Heidegger's main claim could be expressed, he suggests, in more simple terms.

Heidegger's response would be that it is true that everyone knows that one is going to die, but inauthentic interpretation fails to see that we are *already* dying. Hence, in a sense, it does not matter what kind of experience the experience of one's own moment of death would be, for the direct experience and knowledge of this fact does not change the truth that one's worldly existence came to an end.¹¹

Since Edwards falls short of understanding Heidegger's thesis and his project properly, his comments on Heidegger's usage of language are also unfair. First, in order to understand Heidegger's terminology, one has to go into the text and should understand the text from inside. When one tries to understand the terminology without paying attention to the context, one would definitely fail to get the meaning. Second, Heidegger makes use of a technical terminology not for the sake of eccentricity, but because it is required for his philosophical purposes. Heidegger thinks that most of the terms that have been used throughout the history of philosophy have been laden with implications. Since his philosophical aim is to find a new beginning to philosophy with the retrieval of the question of being, and in this way to show the shortcomings and false assumptions of the tradition, he makes up some new terms and confers technical meaning to some other terms like "essence," "conscience,"

¹¹ I think that from a Heideggerian point of view, the important thing is whether one has an authentic understanding of the world and whether one projects oneself on one's authentic possibilities of being or not. In this sense, it is also not the most important thing to live longer. As it is expressed in Jim Morrison's poem "An American Prayer," "O great creator of being/ Grant us one more hour to/ perform our art/ and perfect our lives." Probably Heidegger would agree that it is natural to want to live longer to realize one's possibilities and projects and that what is of paramount importance (or is the greatest achievement) is realizing (in both senses) one's authentic possibilities of being. Otherwise, from a phenomenological perspective one is still dying even when one's life is extended one more day or a hundred more years.

"guilt," etc. The most important reason for this is that Heidegger believes that language is inseparable from thinking and being. Language is not just a neutral means of communication or expression of thoughts, but we think and live in and in terms of language. For this reason "language is the home of being," of the way we make sense of the world and being. So, making up new terms is not just for the sake of eccentricity but to change the way of thinking and the way we approach the philosophical problems. Heidegger's terminology, hence, is meaningful only when one understands his philosophical project and makes sense of the terms in context of his project.

(2.2) Robert Solomon's "Death Fetishism, Morbid Solipsism"

In his recent article "Death Fetishism, Morbid Solipsism" Robert Solomon reflects on the philosophical problem of death and provides a review of the diverse attitudes shown towards death throughout the history of philosophy. He argues that as opposed to various forms of the attitude of "the denial of death" there is another one, "the glorification of the death experience" which he calls death fetishism (162). "It is," Solomon suggests,

the extreme but perverted version of the heroic, warrior mentality in which death is the critical moment in life. But the hero and the warrior do not think of death as an 'experience.' For death fetishists, on the other hand, it is the ultimate (and not just the last) experience... death fetishism utterly rejects the view that death is nothing and insists, with considerable enthusiasm, that it is something, something essential, something to be celebrated, something even to be loved... It is the refusal to trivialize death or to explain it away with an appeal to continuing existence of whatever kind. Death fetishism epitomizes the heroic facing up to the one essential fact that we are all going to die (162-163).

However, the way death fetishists relate themselves to death is different from the way a warrior faces death, Solomon argues. The fetishist flirts with death because for these people death is an erotic phenomenon and "one is not quite certain of one's intention to go through with it" (163). It seems that Solomon describes it as a sort of love-hate relationship—you want it, but at the same time the uncertainty of the possible experience scares you. And then he explains the relation he thinks that exists between

Heidegger and this fetishistic attitude. He argues that even though Heidegger himself does not have such a view, his notion of "being-toward-death" preceded this attitude. Solomon thinks that Heidegger, as opposed to the philosophers who tend to deny death, gives death a crucial place in his philosophy and such a move seems sufficient for others to turn it into a death fetishism.

It is, frankly, not clear at all to me what Solomon exactly means by death fetishism. Probably it is not mere obsession with the thought of death, but also a pleasure about talking a great deal and fantasizing about death. Solomon denies such an attitude by asserting that in fact death is not the focal point of our existence, it is not the most important thing about our being—so, unlike Heidegger thought, we are not "being-toward-death." For death is one reality of life among the many, such as birth, hate, taxes, etc. and we normally do not view our life and the facts of our life in the light of death. Moreover, he claims that albeit death fetishists bravely face certain questions concerning life that most people tend to deny, there lies fear and irresponsibility under the façade of their fascination with death (163-164).

Even if Solomon's analysis of death fetishism has some truth in it, still, to regard Heidegger's philosophy as the source or the first example of an understanding of death as Solomon describes seems like reading too much into Heidegger's thesis. Solomon admits that Heidegger's notion of "being-toward-death" discloses an aspect of truth. But it at the same time leads us to what he calls "morbid solipsism" for it, he argues, denies the social dimension of death at the expense of making it a too personal experience. Death results in a disruption of a network of relationships in the society and for this reason it is more than being just "my death," something that belongs only to me. Lives of my family members, friends and colleagues would be changed with my death. Life will go on, but the saddest thing about death is not only that "I will not be anymore" but also, and maybe more importantly thinking of "what is going to happen to... after my death"—who will take care of my children, what is going to happen to my books, to my reputation, which team will win next week's hockey game, and the like. These are the questions and concerns that the awareness of our death and finitude evokes. Solomon thinks that the pain such concerns and the loss of control in

life death give us is no less than the pain inflicted by the truth that "I will not exist anymore."

In order to avoid some misunderstandings, a brief explication of some important points in Heidegger's philosophy would be helpful. First, for Heidegger, Da-sein is essentially being-in-the-world and is always already in contact with other Da-seins and other animate/inanimate beings. This is because care (*Sorge*) and concern (*Fürsorge*), which define Da-sein's being-in-the-world, are fundamental existential structures of Da-sein's being.¹² That is to say, Da-sein is the being, which essentially cares about the world, beings, persons, events, etc. around it. Moreover, it initially becomes conscious of itself only in and through its relation with the entities and with other people by sharing their values, opinions, thoughts, life style, etc. So, essentially it is not separate from other Da-seins; it is not the lonely "subject" of Cartesian philosophy, rather, it initially and for the most part understands its being in its relation with others and other entities. This means that Da-sein is essentially a social being. To be an authentic self by encountering the mortality of its own being (i.e., one's "being-toward-death") and being anxious of its being do not mean that Da-sein isolates itself from the others. Rather, with the awareness of this truth about its own being, Da-sein directly faces the universal human condition of death itself and with the realization of the finitude of its being, may decide to be an authentic self, i.e., makes its own decisions and projects itself on the authentic possibilities of its being. By doing this, Da-sein does not leave its being-with-others behind but keeps and re-interprets it. This re-interpretation changes its understanding of average everyday understanding of being and its attitudes towards it. Da-sein's facing its own death does not automatically turn it into a selfish or self-centered being who is always

¹² "Care" is Da-sein's fundamental ontological structure for being occupied with the entities that it faces in the world is essential to its being. This does not mean that Da-sein cares about beings but that in any case it deals with the world. Heidegger uses "concern" to distinguish Da-sein's relations with other Da-seins from its relations with entities. Da-sein does not see others as mere ready to hand or present at hand entities, but as Da-seins. Again, in particular cases Da-sein may be hostile to others, but even lack of concern is possible only because concern as an ontological structure underlies Da-sein's particular actions and attitudes. Heidegger uses the term "being-in-the-world" for Da-sein's situated existence in the world and the essentially worldly character of its being. These concepts will be explicated in detail in Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

concerned about its own death and, its awareness of its own finitude does not refrain it from showing positive concern (e.g., love, support, help, etc.) for others. Rather, this confrontation may only differentiate the way Da-sein interprets the world (and also its actions) from the average public interpretation.¹³

Second, Da-sein's authentic understanding of its own death, and projecting itself to its authentic possibilities do not mean that it will not and cannot include its loved ones in its projects. When Da-sein plans its future and considers the authentic possibilities of its being, it does not mean that it should preclude its relations with other people. Da-sein may authentically plan to live with its family and friends or it may not, this is a personal choice. Da-sein may also be concerned about what is going to happen to its family, friends and may worry about their shared projects and plans after its death; however, this aspect of Da-sein's being is not incompatible with its being-toward-death. Solomon argues that,

If dying is a test, a challenge, an occasion of bravery, it is so only in the category of 'being for/with-others,' not 'Being-for-itself' or 'being-toward-death.' ...A noble death, a death not just 'one's own' but with others in mind, for the sake of others, an 'inauthentic' death such as the Homeric heroes might have contemplated. That is the way our philosophies should once again take us—away from morbid solipsism, away from death fetishism, away from nothingness (176).

Even though Solomon's point makes sense, still, all such concerns are natural, but personal. Some people have such concerns, live for others (for their families, friends, etc.) while others do not. To illustrate, it is hard to say that people like Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allan Poe lived (especially the last years of) their lives and died their deaths for others. Because Heidegger's phenomenology is not an analysis of particular attitudes and situations but of the ontological structure and being of Da-sein, it does not address the personal worries and concerns some Da-seins may have in the face of death. It is also not about in what way Da-sein should live its life and how it should view its personal relationships with other persons—it already assumes the reality and existence of various attitudes, opinions, and actions, but is an analysis of the condition of the possibility of the multiplicity of experiences. Accordingly,

¹³ A more detailed discussion of authenticity and inauthenticity will take place especially in the Chapters 3 and 4.

Heidegger's analysis starts from a proper understanding of Da-sein. According to this analysis, Da-sein understands the objects it encounters in the world as they are situated in and related to each other in a context of referentiality. In the midst of this referential whole, it discloses the possibilities of its being only in relation with other beings and Da-seins; and it is the being that concerns and cares about the world and others. Therefore, whenever it considers its life and its own authentic/inauthentic possibilities, it (as Solomon would agree) always perceives them in relation with other beings and persons (i.e., in a social context). Da-sein is still a social being and is in relation with other persons (directly or indirectly) and beings even when it lives and dies alone. But this does not mean that it lives and dies for the sake of others *per se*. In fact, for Heidegger, seeing oneself constantly from the other's perspective and living one's life without questioning the commonly accepted values (because everybody does so and this is the "normal" thing to do) is inauthentic, for this makes Da-sein oblivious to its own being and its authentic possibilities. Da-sein can live its life authentically with its loved ones but first, it should project itself upon its authentic possibilities of being, interpret the world authentically and make them part of its project, and at the same time be a part of their projects.

Third, I think that Solomon's views on death are the upshot of a subjectivist point of view, which, I think, may unnecessarily boost fear of and worry about death. He suggests that the loss of control over the world and life death brings about is one of the most disturbing things about one's own death. He writes that,

[w]e worry about the people we care for, but then we also worry that they will be fine without our care, indeed, that they will not even remember us without our constant, even kindly, reminders.... Put in the least flattering way, we might say that my death is a bad thing because it deprives the universe of me. I picture the world, without me, like Sartre's characters in *No Exit*. I see them talk about me, laugh about me, pity me. I watch someone date and marry my wife, raise my children, refute my books... All this is not grand metaphysics or 'fundamental ontology' but petty selfishness wrapped up in enigma (174-175).

Even though the idea of picturing the world without me might be existentially valuable and meaningful, still, I think that from Heidegger's point of view, this is not the best way of understanding one's own death. Life will go on in Da-sein's absence and it

will lose its control on life and its loved ones' lives, but the question is, is that the right way of understanding one's relationships? Maybe the greatest mistake Da-sein can do is to try to control everything around it including the lives and acts of their loved ones.¹⁴ To a certain extent such concerns are normal and understandable for in order to survive in the world we have to control at least some resources and plan our future. However, thinking that humans could control and plan everything as if they were the owner of the world and their relationships sounds problematic—indeed, as Heidegger remarks, Da-sein is not the owner (or master) of being (*Seinde*), it is the “shepherd of being (*Sein*).” In fact, humans' power to control is not unlimited and, more importantly, human beings are closely bound by and dependent on the world and other beings around them. Humans see this truth especially when something disrupts them from achieving their goals or disturbs their stable, orderly lives (like death of a loved one, a permanent illness, the ailments of old age, etc.). At such moments the uncontrollable region of existence and being shows its face. Death, as a boundary situation of human existence, powerfully discloses this truth. In its encounter with its own mortality, Da-sein understands that it is insufficient, incomplete and not omnipotent. Death terminates one's potentiality of existence and is more than just a biological event. In view of that, Da-sein comprehends its finitude and sees that in fact it cannot have absolute control over life and its own existence. Da-sein is approaching the end of its being as long as it is born. An authentic understanding and recognition of death does not lead Da-sein into a nihilism and constant depression. Rather, it has the potential to give Da-sein freedom from the pressure of the desire to realize some particular ends, e.g. of wanting to have absolute control in life or in certain regions of being. Therefore, from Heidegger's point of view, death is the end of one's potentiality of being and also is one of the limits that mark Da-sein's powerlessness and inability to control life and world absolutely. The correct attitude towards death and life is letting things be and letting it happen where one does not

¹⁴ I assume that even though particular persons do not have the intention to control everything, e.g. nature, resources, etc., still, a desire to have control over other persons' lives originates from the same rationality which, I think, conceives human subject in the center of the world and/or relationships.

have the ability to control them. This does not mean dispensing from all sorts of planning and controlling, but accepting one's limitedness where one is powerless. If Da-sein rejects to admit the limitedness of being, it tries to cover up this truth and whenever it thinks of death this reminds it of the powerlessness of its being that causes fear and depression. As Solomon argues one is situated in a network of social relationships, which is disrupted with one's death. But the truth is that the existence and continuity of this network is neither dependent on one particular person, nor it is intentionally created by one or more persons. Rather, it happens, occurs with the existence and interaction of Da-seins. So this network will change but still exists without regard to particular Da-seins' existence. We, persons, do not intentionally create this network, when we are born, we find ourselves in the midst of it. Thinking that "my death will deprive the universe of me" denies this truth and evokes a disturbing feeling of fear and depression in the face of death. Certainly, Da-sein's family and friends will live and rearrange their lives after its death, but, from a Heideggerian perspective, the correct attitude of Da-sein, who understands the limitedness of its being is to accept this and spend one's life in the best possible way it can live. For I think that the sort of worries Solomon mentions are an upshot of the false assumption that essentially Da-sein is the being that controls the world and network of relationships, and its inability to control the world after its death is a deficiency. Da-sein is the being that defines itself in and through its relation and interaction with other beings and Da-seins—which means that it, to a certain extent, controls and possesses its relationships, but at the same time (probably for the most part) *is being controlled and possessed by them*. Da-sein does not have existence or a self apart from or isolated from this network of relations, moreover, it is not the owner or master of its own relationships. I think that Da-sein's concern about the future of its family after its death (the kind of concern Solomon states) stems from a strong feeling of possession which leads to a forgetfulness of the truth that one is *not* the owner of one's family and friends, but is together with them. Da-sein should enjoy its being-together-with its loved ones, but it should also understand that it *must not* define

its relations in terms of possession. When Da-sein sees and accepts that some things are beyond its control, it will learn to let it be.

Besides, there is no special place for morbidity (as Solomon implies) in Da-sein's life in Heidegger's philosophy—for Da-sein, according to Heidegger, in its authentic or inauthentic mood, does not have any special inclination to think about or enjoy the thought of death. Inauthentic Da-sein tends to avoid such ideas and is most of the time immersed in its daily life and activities. In an authentic mode, on the other hand, it does not obsessively think about its own death. Instead, authentically knowing that it is a mortal being, it projects itself to its possibilities, that is, tries to be the person it can be (and it wants to be) and lives in accordance with it. This is completely different from pondering on one's death each and every day and getting some kind of satisfaction from it. The awareness of the mortality of one's being always remains in the background of one's life. When Heidegger talks about Da-sein's being-toward-death, he does not deny the social being of Da-sein. He points out that usually we understand death as a social fact that we observe in the world (which may change and disrupt at least some of the social relations) but forget that death belongs to us and is an ever-present possibility. Da-sein's authentic understanding of the fact that it is itself essentially a mortal being and it is constantly running out of time makes it see its life, being and relations with others in a new light. Even if Solomon's description of death fetishism and morbidity may apply to some artists and/or thinkers, Heidegger is hardly one of them.

(2.3) General Remarks

It seems that there are a number of reasons for the various misinterpretations of Heidegger's thesis. The main reasons is failure to understand Heidegger's technical terminology, the objectives of his project, his method, content of his discussions, and the problems caused by translation. I think that another important reason for such misinterpretations is that some commentators have read only the sections about death in *BT* to see what Heidegger says about the meaning and essence of death. Since

Heidegger introduces his terminology, the objectives of his project and develops his philosophy in earlier sections, a hasty reader is puzzled with his writing style and the way he handles philosophical problems. Obviously, this is not a good way of understanding the meaning of a text properly. I think that the way to make sense of a theory is to first read it sympathetically, that is, try to get what it wants to say, see the world in its eyes, listen to and learn to speak its language. Any profound criticism can only arise from a good understanding of the text.

Chapter 3: Heidegger's Philosophy of Being

(3.1) *Da-sein and the Question of Being*

In *BT* Heidegger's main concern is the question of being. He takes an existential analysis of *Da-sein* as the starting point of his project. Before we go into a more detailed explication of his project, an account of the relation between the question of being and *Da-sein*, and the place of death in his project would be helpful for our purposes.

Heidegger employs the term "*Da-sein*" for human existence mainly for two reasons. First, he does not want to use the terms "human being," or "man" which have been used by many philosophers in the history of philosophy, and, for this reason, burdened with ideological and metaphysical connotations. The terms "human being" and "man" are associated with "humanism" and the Enlightenment/religious understanding of human being as a subject/creation of God. Heidegger, who is not very sympathetic to humanistic and religious approaches, dispenses with these terms to avoid such misunderstandings and difficulties.

Second, "*Da-sein*" which stands for human existence in *BT* perfectly conveys the message Heidegger wants to give. The German word '*Da-sein*' literally means "there-to be" or "here-to be"—depending on the context. This term clearly expresses Heidegger's meaning: human existence cannot be defined by a list of characteristics, it is "there" as the locus and medium of being itself. The term "*Da-sein*" signifies that being is "there" in and through human existence. Therefore, "*Da-sein*" designates the being which is itself "a pure expression of being" (*BT* 12). Even though beings exist independently from *Da-sein*, being exists only because *Da-sein* is. *Da-sein* is the locus of the disclosure of being for in the absence of *Da-sein* there cannot be any context of meaning, understanding or truth. *Da-sein* is the being that understands, that makes sense of the world and has the notion of truth; hence, it, as the being that is understanding of being and the disclosure of being, is the necessary condition for the existence of being.

According to him, the essence of Da-sein does not lie in its objective presence—its *existentia* always has priority over its *essentia*. That is, it is not the case that any objective attribute or characteristic defines and determines Da-sein's essence; on the contrary, it is the being of Da-sein that defines its essence. Its essence lies in its existence—"it always understands itself in terms of its existence" (BT 12). The "essence" of Da-sein's being is its to be. "The whatness (*essentia*) of this being must be understood in terms of its being (*existentia*) insofar as one can speak of it at all" (BT 42). So, there are two major pitfalls of defining the essence of Da-sein that we should be aware of: First, it cannot be defined as an object, for its essence cannot be reduced to its objective presence; second, its essence can by no means be understood (in a peculiarly Platonic way) as a universal, most general *idea*, in which all particulars partake.

Da-sein's essence is the "possible ways for it to be, and only this. The thatness of this being is primarily being;" and the being of Da-sein is not a general category or an object but the kind of being which is always "mine" (BT 42). Da-sein is the only being among the beings concerned with its own being—which means that (even though Da-sein never becomes fully conscious of this peculiarly important aspect of its being) it does not take its being as a stable, given, objective entity, but regards its own being as its possibility, i.e., its being is always outstanding, always incomplete. Yet, these decisions or possibilities do not "belong to" Da-sein like some property of an objectively present entity, on the contrary, Da-sein itself is essentially possibility. Da-sein always makes decisions, it

is always essentially its possibility, it can "choose" itself in its being, it *can* win itself, it can lose itself, or it can never and only "apparently" win itself. It can only have lost itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as authentic, that is, belongs to itself (BT 42-43).

The objective of Heidegger's analysis in *BT* is not to provide a "metaphysic" of Da-sein, that is, not to provide an anthropological, psychological, ethical, etc. account of it, but to understand this being in its being as a way of retrieving the question of being itself. No scientific study can ever comprehend Da-sein in its mode of being, (i.e., in its existence) but may provide an account of its characteristics,

tendencies and properties. Heidegger, however, suggests that the being of Da-sein cannot be comprehended in this way and its being must absolutely be differentiated from the being of all other beings. The essence of Da-sein, unlike that of other beings, cannot be defined in terms of pre-determined, non-changing objective properties, and, therefore, cannot be explicated in terms of a scientific or empirical study of human existence—nor can it be explained in terms of dogmatic metaphysics that seeks to pin down a permanent human nature. A proper understanding of the being of Da-sein requires a different kind of analysis. Ultimately, the point of the analysis of the constitution of Da-sein's being is solely to clarify the meaning of being. In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, while summarizing the main thesis of *BT*, Heidegger remarks that, "the understanding-of-being is to be brought to light by way of Da-sein's mode of being, which is primarily existence.... [T]he metaphysics of Da-sein itself is not... the central focus" (136).

Still, pursuing the question of being is dependent on an understanding of the existence of Da-sein in its entirety. An explication of the meaning of the phenomenon of death in Heidegger's philosophy, therefore, gets its full meaning in the light of the way Heidegger seeks to answer this most basic question. For our purposes, since the phenomenon of death is part of the being of Da-sein, understanding and situating death correctly within the whole picture of the existential analysis of Da-sein is a significant task.

For Heidegger, the significance of death does not originate merely from its being a universal ontic fact of human reality, but from death's being an existential limit for the human situation. A human situation, as E. L. Fackenheim argues, is neither a fact that could be objectively known in an impartial manner, nor an anthropological, psychological, sociological or biographical fact. A human situation can only be properly understood by each individual's direct encounter with it. Albeit

discovered by each for himself, the human situation, when recognized as such, is understood to be universally human. Thus death is part of the human situation, and yet distorted when viewed as a mere objective fact. "All men must die" is a mere objectification. The existential truth is "each man must die for himself," when faced up to by an individual as a truth which applies to himself (*MH* 75-76).

So, a genuine understanding of death is possible only when each person gets it in and through her own individuality, for the way to the meaning of death as a universal human truth is possible only through understanding it individually—as something which is mine, and accessible only through my individual encounter with it.

Even though any and every understanding of death (as a human situation) is not independent from historical and natural situations, still, this universal human situation of death is the ontological ground of all the historical specific understandings of death. In fact, natural and historical interpretations appear as particular disclosures of the universal human situation which itself lays out the possibility of those singular manifestations. For this reason a set of historically particular interpretations of death do not furnish us with a genuine understanding of death in its universality. Such an accurate understanding, on the other hand, could only take place as the individual encounters death himself; i.e., understands it as his own death, as something belonging to him (MH 76).

(3.2) The Necessity of the Retrieval of the Question of Being

In *BT*, Heidegger explicitly articulates his main concern as the question of being. He argues that throughout the history of philosophy, philosophers have lost sight of the question of being, and mistakenly occupied themselves only with the realm of beings. That is, they have confined their philosophical analysis to the ontic level (to the realm of beings or entities), without paying attention to the ontological grounds that lay out the possibility of the disclosure of that level to *Da-sein*. The following analogy may make Heidegger's point clearer. Forgetting being is like perceiving a room and the whole set of objects it contains, but failing to notice the light, which is itself distinct from the room and the objects, that illuminates the room. Even though the light makes the appearance of objects possible and encompasses the objects, it itself remains invisible (and, in this way, "forgotten"). For this reason, philosophers are utterly confused when it comes to musing upon the meaning of the words 'be,' or 'being' (which need to be explained ontologically). This is so, as a

natural outcome of their conflation of the meaning of being (*Sein*) with beings (*Seiende*). Consequently, philosophers, by giving precedence to beings over being, have forgotten the question of being throughout the history.

Why is the question of being of the greatest importance for Heidegger? Why should philosophers' forgetting of this particular question be an issue? The question is an important one because the forgetting of the question of being leads to the forgetting of the being of the questioner. Questioning is a mode of being of Da-sein. When Da-sein asks about the meaning of being, this inquiry is also about the being of the questioner—Da-sein is the locus and the medium for the truth and forgetting of being is actually forgetting of ourselves. Da-sein, by disregarding this decisive question is essentially disregarding the truth—and its own being as the disclosure of truth. Hence, the question of being, unlike many other questions, cannot be an indifferent matter for Da-sein. Rather, it is the question the pursuit of which will enable Da-sein to understand its own being in a better and clearer fashion.

Heidegger notes that the question of being is the most basic question for our daily average understanding of being "attains its necessary guideline only with the developed concept of being" (BT 5). In other words, an understanding of being is implicit to any and all our relations to beings (understanding, explaining, dealing with them, etc.) and also implicit to the very being of Da-sein. Beings are and have always been determined and understood as beings only on the basis of, or in the context of, being (like the objects that are illuminated by and in the light) which is itself definitely *not* a being (BT 6). Yet, an authentic understanding of being can only arise from an authentic existentiell understanding.¹⁵ How can one know which existentiell understanding is authentic? Heidegger asserts that the developed understanding of being itself will distinguish between the authentic and inauthentic existentiell understandings. This, Heidegger calls, is a "fantastic undertaking" which is made possible by some privileged disclosures such as anxiety, death, etc. These disclosures are privileged, because Da-sein in its encounter with them comes to know the limits of its own existence and grasps its condition as a whole. In this respect, death is one of

¹⁵ Heidegger uses "existentiell understanding" for a particular self-interpretation which a particular Da-sein lives and the existential possibility it chooses to enact (HBT 16).

the limits of Da-sein's existence an authentic awareness of which discloses the whole of Da-sein's condition. When we get a developed understanding of the concept of being itself, we will not only be able to see the obscured and forgotten meaning of being, but also will understand what kind of obscurations prevented us from getting its meaning (*BT* 5). Therefore, only in the process of investigation can we explicitly know exactly what has been forgotten and what possibilities of comprehending the meaning of being have been hidden from us.

According to Heidegger, this oblivion is, in a sense, essential, for such being-forgottenness belongs to the essence of truth. Heidegger suggests that there are dimensions of truth such as ontic, propositional, ontological. It is the ontological truth which Heidegger thinks that has been misconceived and forgotten throughout the history of philosophy—the disclosure of being, the disclosure in which the disclosed both shows and hides itself. In this disclosure, what is revealed is destined to be veiled and obscured in the hands of everydayness of Da-sein in the course of time. It is the philosophers' task to scratch and dig the surface of everyday understanding of being, which is deceptively obvious and straightforward, yet, in fact, covers and hides the truth of being as a murky fog.

(3.3) How to Formulate the Question of Being

Now the question is how are we to retrieve the question of being? In what way should we deal with this question? Certainly, for a genuine philosophical venture for the sake of retrieving the question, we have to depart from the traditional way, and take a different route that will open a new horizon in front of us—for what we really have to do must be different from what has been done by now. Given the mistakes and shortcomings of tradition in handling the question throughout the history of philosophy, what is needed is a new method, a novel approach to the issue which will not only bypass these shortcomings, but also will clearly show us absolutely *where*, at *which* point, and *when* the traditional philosophy went astray and left the question of

being in sheer obscurity. As Heidegger later articulates in his 1935 lectures which were published as *Introduction to Metaphysics*,

To ask: how does it stand with Being?—this means nothing less than to *repeat and retrieve* [*wieder-holen*] the inception of our historical-spiritual Da-sein, in order to transform it into the other inception.... But an inception is not repeated when one shrinks back to it as something that once was, something that by now is familiar and is simply to be imitated, but rather when the inception is begun again *more originally*, and with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity that a genuine inception brings with it (29-30).

In this way, Heidegger adopts a new beginning to his philosophy. However, this new beginning and the retrieval of the question of being by no means amounts to backing away from the tradition. Rather, we "should stake out the positive possibilities of the tradition, and that always means to fix its *boundaries*" (BT 22). The retrieval does not suggest a forgetting of the past; it aims at remembering and unearthing what is worth considering, what is "there" but has been forgotten and overlooked. He suggests that,

[b]y the re-trieving of a fundamental problem we understand the disclosure of its original potentialities, the problem is transformed and thus for the first time in its intrinsic content conserved. To conserve a problem, however, means to retain free and awake all those inner forces that render this problem in its fundamental essence possible (KPM 242-243).

Yet, there is not only one way of accomplishing such a retrieval. As Heidegger asserts, there are many possible ways of retrieving the question of being. Nonetheless, he notes that this does not mean that we are allowed to choose whimsically any and every way we want without giving it a prior thought. He maintains that,

[w]e must look for a way to illuminate the fundamental ontological question and *follow* it. Whether that way is the *only* one or even the *right* one can be decided only after we have *followed* it. The *strife* in relation to the interpretation of being cannot be settled *because it has not yet even been started*. And finally it cannot be "jumped into," but the beginning of the strife already needs preparation (BT 437).

So, what is the most proper and necessary point of departure? If we cannot jump right into the investigation, from where should our preparatory analysis start? According to Heidegger, as a first step of the ontological analysis, we should consider the being,



whose being is distinct from all other beings, namely, Da-sein in the first place. Since it is Da-sein whose existence and dwelling in the world makes asking the question of being possible, Da-sein's being also provides the proper ground for the investigation of this question. He states that

freeing the horizon in which something like being in general becomes intelligible amounts to clarifying the possibility of the understanding of being in general, an understanding which itself belongs to the constitution of that being which we call Da-sein. The understanding of being, however, cannot be *radically* clarified as an essential factor in the being of Da-sein, unless the being to whose being it belongs has been *primordially* interpreted in itself with regard to its being (BT 231).

This means that "*fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of Da-sein*" (BT 13). Da-sein, to whom the world reveals itself as it is, or, in better terms, which is the locus and the medium of the truth of being, is the main topic of the analysis. Given the truth that philosophizing and the philosophical investigation of being is a radicalization of Da-sein's ontic (pre-ontological, i.e., everyday) making sense of being, the first task of the fundamental ontology must be a proper analysis of being of Da-sein (BT 13). Hence, this undertaking should not overlook more basic and common everyday being of Da-sein, but take this level of being (which breeds the possibility of pursuing a philosophical contemplation and understanding) as the starting point of the existential analysis of Da-sein. It is not the case that Da-sein initially does not have "real knowledge" of the world—on the contrary, we have "knowledge" of the world in and through our everyday understanding of beings.

For Heidegger, like Kant, the correct philosophical question to begin with is this: Given that we *already have* an understanding of the world, how is our understanding of the world possible? Yet, the way Heidegger comes to grips with this problem differs remarkably from Kant. For Kant, this is an epistemological problem, and we, human beings, should avoid making metaphysical assumptions with regard to the realm of "things-in-themselves" which is unknown to finite cognizers. Heidegger, despite being in agreement with Kant regarding the true philosophical question, still approaches it basically as an ontological problem. Philosophers since Descartes,

occupied themselves with the question of the truth as a question of the correspondence of our mental representations of the world. Such an attempt, by accepting beforehand the priority of the subject-object relationship in Da-sein's making sense of the world, conceives the problem merely as an epistemological one—the problem of securing correspondence of mental representations to the world. According to Heidegger,

[j]ust as certainly as a *core* of genuine understanding is to be found in all [various kinds of realism and idealism], it would be just as wrong if one wanted to achieve a tenable solution of the problem by calculating what is actually correct. Rather, what is needed is the basic insight that the various epistemological directions do not so much go off the track epistemologically, but, that, because they neglect the existential analytic of Da-sein in general, they do not even attain the basis for a phenomenally secured problematic. Nor is this *basis* to be attained by subsequent phenomenological improvement of the concept of the subject and consciousness. Such a procedure would not guarantee that the inappropriate *line of questioning* would not, after all, remain (BT 207).

Therefore, pursuing the problem of being merely in an epistemological way (as, for example, Kant does) does not give the right direction to our analysis. Even if those philosophers who pursue the epistemological project may offer impeccable reasons and arguments, their ignorance of the necessity of providing their theories with an existential analysis of Da-sein, and their unquestioning adoption of the basic metaphysical assumptions made by their predecessors misdirected their investigations. Rather, this "problem must be taken back into the existential analytic of Da-sein as an ontological problem" (BT 208). What Heidegger means by an ontological analysis also differs considerably from the traditional understanding; his ontology of Da-sein is primarily concerned with the nature of Da-sein's understanding of the world which is *not* knowledge. Heidegger's main concern is not the mental representations' correspondence to the world but investigating a more essential way of making sense of the world, namely, our understanding of being (which itself cannot be understood as a genus or substance). Doing ontology, for Heidegger, is an inquiry about the essence of such understanding of being.

Therefore, if the solution to the question of being to be found in the existential analytic of Da-sein, the question we are seeking to answer should concern the essence of Da-sein. An analysis of the characteristics of Da-sein must be an existential

analysis—which means that those “characteristics are not properties of something objectively present, but essentially existential ways to be” (BT 133). This also hints that an investigation of the essence of Da-sein is not about a fixed “whatness” or form. Rather, it is a “who” question which is about this being whose essence lies in its existence. Da-sein is not a being among other beings. The distinguishing characteristic of Da-sein is that it is *the* being, which, in its being, is concerned *about* its very being. This concern lies in the constitution of Da-sein, which means that it already has an understanding of its being. Put in better terms, its being *is* to understand being (for Da-sein’s being *is* understanding)—although this (especially as it is in the ontic, everyday understanding of Da-sein) is far from being a clear and thorough understanding. This characteristic marks Da-sein’s ontological distinction from all other beings. Da-sein’s understanding of its own very being itself is a determination of being of Da-sein. For this reason, Da-sein, unlike other beings, can be grasped neither as an objective presence whose essence has been determined beforehand nor as a useful thing at hand (BT 12). Rather, its essence lies in its existence (*Existenz*), accentuating the indeterminate character of being of Da-sein. Da-sein, as a pure expression of being, is defined by its existence, in other words, its being is to exist.

Having established this, the disclosure of the being of Da-sein and the clarification of the question of being requires a complete analysis of the various aspects of the being of Da-sein. Seen from a Heideggerian point of view, in our search for a better answer to the question of being, the fuller and broader our analysis and disclosure are, the truer and clearer the understanding of being will be. Thus, the analysis of Da-sein (*Daseinsanalyse*) should try to disclose Da-sein in its wholeness, with all the different aspects of its being (while refraining from turning it into a patchwork) and take into account all these different aspects in pursuit of the analysis. How can we do this? By stepping outside of Da-sein’s being and having a look at it from above? Such an attempt would adopt a transcendental phenomenological approach (in a Husserlian way). What Heidegger is willing to do, by contrast, is to realize the possibility for Da-sein to understand its being from *within* its own being.

Besides, for Heidegger, seeing Da-sein as a whole is not something like understanding persons as their being comes to an end in death. Such an understanding provides only an external approach to one's existence. Since no one can understand one's own life after its closure, only other persons who observe someone's life from outside can do such an analysis. Moreover, this attitude treats death merely as an event that marks the end of a person's life, and also understands Da-sein as an entity whose being can be explicated as an objective presence, whose existence and finitude are understood solely with reference to the events of birth and death and the time between these two events.

Heidegger, however, does not accept such a conceptualization for two main reasons. First of all, he does not see death merely as an event but as a constant possibility of Da-sein's being. Second, death, in Heidegger's account, is not a particular individual's death. And analyzing Da-sein and understanding the meaning of death are not about dealing with any unique and personal story of one person's relation with her being and death. Rather, it aims at comprehending death as an existential element of Da-sein's being—that is, as a phenomenon which is universal to all human beings, or to Da-sein's being. Therefore, the meaning of completeness that Heidegger mentions and sets as a goal of his analysis pertains neither to giving a full account of a Da-sein's life in detail (as a completed life and being in death) nor to an investigation in the peculiarities of how one or some particular persons relate themselves to their own being and death. It is, rather, understanding the existential structure of Da-sein's being in its completeness, not of the complete set of events in its life.

According to Heidegger, as we have mentioned before, Da-sein is its understanding of being and being itself comes to be "there" in and through Da-sein's understanding of being—even though its understanding is not all comprehensive and not completely true. This is Da-sein's pre-theoretical and pre-ontological apprehension of being where some features of being remain latent. Yet Da-sein could achieve this disclosure as a whole only by engaging in its own being in an authentic fashion. Therefore, for Heidegger, the full comprehension of being is closely related

with the authentic mode of Da-sein—for the disclosure of its being in its entirety is possible only as authentic disclosure of being. In order not to lose the sight of wholeness of Da-sein's being, Heidegger starts his analysis from the most readily available, yet at the same time the most obscured, understanding of Da-sein, viz., *everydayness*. This is not an arbitrary choice; on the contrary, it has its own necessity. Even though Heidegger's analysis is an ontological one he nonetheless asserts that Da-sein's access to beings lies in the disclosure of the ontic level, that is, being is revealed in its contact with beings themselves. In accordance with this fact,

the roots of the existential analysis... are ultimately *existentiell*—they are *ontic*. Only when philosophical research and inquiry themselves are grasped in an *existentiell* way—as a possibility of being of each existing Da-sein—does it become possible at all to disclose the existentiality of existence and therewith to get hold of a sufficiently grounded set of ontological problems. But with this the ontic priority of the question of being has also become clear (BT 13-14).

Therefore, the existential analysis of Da-sein should start from the ontic level.

(3.4) *Da-sein's Being-in-the-World*

Da-sein's being is initially and for the most part in everydayness; it finds itself initially in the everydayness of its own being. Yet, in order to talk about everyday being of Da-sein, first it has already been assumed that Da-sein *is* in the world. That it *exists* in the world is a point of departure for our analysis.

Da-sein's being is being-in-the-world, which means that Da-sein is not a worldless self, but its existence can only be defined as existence in the world. Even though it engages itself in the most abstract categories of thinking, sciences, mathematics, etc., it is, still, "in the world," and participates in everyday life: the objects it uses (pen, typewriter, paper, etc.) are in the world and part of the everydayness. That is, Da-sein's being is being with innerworldly beings, it can recognize and realize its own being only with and through its relation with innerworldly beings.

(3.4.1) *Being-in-the-World*

What does it mean to say that Da-sein exists "in the world"? According to Heidegger Da-sein's being-in does not signify a spatial relation between two things. Since Da-sein's being cannot be defined as objective presence, its being-in cannot be reduced to mere physical existence as well. Therefore, its being-in is also different from the being-in of all other objects. Heidegger defines Da-sein's factual existence in the world as *facticity* which means that "an 'innerworldly' [Da-sein] being has being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the being of those beings which it encounters within its own world" (BT 56). Therefore, Da-sein's life and actions are possible and meaningful only in its relatedness to other beings.

Heidegger suggests that the existential characteristic of Da-sein that enables Da-sein's to be affected by beings is *attunement*. Da-sein is always already attuned, that is, always already in a mood. In its initial attunement, Da-sein finds itself "there," that is, the "thrownness of its being into its 'there'" as being-in-the-world. (BT, 135) The beings in the world, i.e. the prior disclosure of the innerworldly beings, are also initially revealed to Da-sein by attunement.

Da-sein's being cannot be understood in terms of its spatiality, its being-in-the-world actually is not a mere spatial presence juxtaposed to other beings. On the contrary, it is the facticity of Da-sein which makes understanding of Da-sein as a spatial being possible. Da-sein's being-in is defined by *care*, the fundamental ontological structure of Da-sein. Da-sein is not indifferent or unresponsive to the world around it (even when it is in its irresponsible, lazy, etc. moods) because beings, events, situations, etc. matter to it. Care is the condition of Da-sein's interaction with the beings and other Da-seins, otherwise, it would be in a sheer indifference to the world and its being would not be possibly differentiated from objective presence. Beings are revealed only to Da-sein since it is essentially the being that *cares* about them. Care, in this sense, is the most fundamental structure of Da-sein that marks its distinction from all other beings. Da-sein always cares about the world, i.e., by

producing, looking at, talking about, forgetting, contemplating, letting go, etc.—and understands itself and its being-in-the-world in its relation with what-it-is not—in other words, in its engagement with the beings that it encounters within the world (*BT* 58).¹⁶

Yet, Da-sein cannot choose its being-in-the-world—it does not determine the initial starting point of its life and therefore the possibilities that beginning will bestow to it. Rather, it initially finds itself and is disclosed to itself in the mode of *thrownness*. Thrownness is Da-sein's initial finding itself in the world, being conscious of its being in the world in its initial condition, for example, as the daughter of a poor/rich family, being born in a small/big city, having literate/illiterate parents, having an outstanding talent in music, or a natural inclination to the sports, etc. Thrownness is the mode over which Da-sein has no control but which plays a crucial role in its self-understanding and the route of its life—for these initial conditions over which Da-sein has no control disclose the possibilities of Da-sein's being (such as being a mathematician, a concert pianist, a poet, etc.).

Heidegger argues that being-in-the-world essentially belongs to Da-sein to emphasize Da-sein's situatedness in the world—rather than being a “subject” who first exists, and only then finds itself in a world. It is not that Da-sein's existence is in the world because it exists but just the other way around: Da-sein exists and it can exist only as a thrown being-in-the-world, which in fact belongs to the essence of its existence (*MFL* 169). What follows from this basic assumption is an important diversion from the traditional philosophy: to start with the idea that Da-sein is situated in the world leads us to think that its understanding of the world and of itself are also built upon its situatedness. Heidegger argues that

Da-sein tends to understand its own being in terms of that being to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related—the “world.” In Da-sein itself and therewith in its own understanding of being, ...the way the world is understood is ontologically reflected back upon the interpretation of Da-sein (*BT* 15-16).

¹⁶ Both “attunement” and “care” must be understood as ontological concepts—feelings, emotions, etc. (like fear, hatred, liking, being afraid) are possible as ontic manifestations of them.

Da-sein's self-understanding and making sense of the world are not an upshot of self-reflection. Rather, this happens by virtue of Da-sein's understanding and interpretation of the world and its contents, i.e., beings. Meaning, hence, is not an object that is found in the world or in Da-sein's head that it projects upon the world; rather, it is the disclosure of beings' involvement and place in a structure of totality of reference (or context) through understanding and interpreting. Da-sein cannot capriciously confer any and every meaning it wants to the world as a whole, or to the particular beings. The limits of a proper understanding of the meaning of beings is directed and restricted by the beings themselves. Da-sein is surrounded by beings and the meaning it confers on them is conditional upon the beings' letting themselves be seen within the world. Da-sein may get the meaning wrong, but it is "only because something claims to show itself in accordance with its meaning at all, ... can it show itself as something it is not, or can it 'only look like...'" (BT 29). Da-sein can perceive other things around it only because they are able to reveal themselves within the world (BT 57).

Da-sein always already has an understanding of the world and of the beings as they show themselves within it. It is only through this initial understanding (or "knowledge") that Da-sein can be involved with the beings, e.g., looking at them, manipulating them, using them etc. Da-sein's being-in-the-world is already split into many different ways of being-in, e.g., speaking, giving up, looking for, etc. Moreover, Da-sein

primordially gives itself to understand its being and potentiality-of-being with regard to its being-in-the-world. The for-the-sake-of-which signifies an in-order-to, the in-order-to signifies a what-for, the what-for signifies a what-in of letting something be relevant, and the latter a what-with of relevance. These relations are interlocked among themselves as a primordial totality. They are what they are as this signifying in which Da-sein gives itself to understand its being-in-the-world beforehand (BT 87).

This structure of relations constitute *significance* (which is the structure of the world), and Da-sein, by its understanding of this structure, is the condition of the possibility of the disclosure of these beings (BT 87). Significance is "anchored in the being of Da-sein," the prior knowledge of which lets beings show themselves to Da-sein as they

are (BT 123). Da-sein always already finds and understands itself in and through its being-in-the-world which provides the conditions for Da-sein's being-with beings and being-with other Da-seins.

(3.4.2) Spatiality of Da-sein

It can be inferred from Heidegger's account of Da-sein that it is not an abstract *cogito* or a psychological subject but that its being could be described as an embodied self. Even though in *BT* Heidegger rarely mentions body, Da-sein is a biological, embodied being. The point of this attitude is that if we endeavor to analyze being of human beings by taking the body and/or the bodily activities (dancing, laughing, writing, staring, smiling) as the point of departure, then we find ourselves facing the problem of attaching something to this body (like rationality or spirit) to make it a "full-fledged" human being, to mark its separateness from all other animate/inanimate beings. This results in the loss of unity of the Da-sein. Besides, this is not the way we regard and become aware of ourselves. We do not develop a self-consciousness by first seeing that we, as human beings, have a body or we are bodies in the same way as cats, books, trees and record-players are; indeed, we view ourselves as whole human beings. It needs a conscious effort to consider our own selves as mere spirit or just an object in the world. In fact, we are not usually aware of our bodies when our health is in a good order.

We do not constantly remind ourselves that we have (or we are) bodies; body, most of the time, is inconspicuous in daily life. It recedes in the background of all our doings and activities and rarely comes to the foreground, to the focus of our attention. Nor is body an attachment to Da-sein, which essentially is a disembodied self. If we use the analogy of hardware (body) and software (mind), Da-sein should not be conceived as the combination of them, rather it is an intertwined whole of the capacities and abilities of both software and hardware. So, philosophically, we should start from Da-sein, not from some sort of abstract, reductionist or artificial conception of what a human being is.

It is clear that Heidegger neither ignores nor evades the phenomenon of the embodiedness of the self and the phenomenon of bodily death, but his analysis seeks an ontological understanding of the meaning of death. This is because Da-sein ontologically is *the* being which understands, interprets and is concerned about its being, hence, it cannot be seen merely as a material bodily being. As a result, its death should also be investigated ontologically.

(3.4.3) *World*

According to Heidegger, the term "world" does not preclude the materiality of the world, but at the same time cannot possibly be reduced to it. We encounter various kinds of beings in the world, daisies, rabbits, clouds, poems, typewriters, etc. Yet, enumerating and listing the events and beings that we perceive and deal with gives only an ontic definition of the world. The main objective of Heidegger's analysis, however, cannot be fulfilled with such a definition since his analysis is mainly concerned not with the beings, but with the *being* of the beings.

The basis of the beings is substantiality. The material beings exist independently from the existence of Da-sein. However, the world cannot be understood as a conglomeration of beings or a bundle of perceptions. For, it is the world which determines how the particular beings appear to us as beings. When Da-sein finds itself in the world, it does not (as empiricist philosophers argue) first perceive mere sounds, colors, shapes, and then put these pieces into meaningful wholes. Rather, we hear the horn of the cars, see the colors of the umbrellas, and taste the dry taste of wine. That is, Da-sein always grasps things in a context of meaning constituted by Da-sein's being-with-others (i.e., in the social world) and being-with other beings.

We run into particular beings in particular environments, in certain contexts, such as a study, a kitchen, a studio. So, we do not see them as particular entities isolated from each other, but situated in an environment. In fact, the context of signification makes the revelation of the particular objects as objects to us possible—

for we conceptualize them "as something" by their "what-for" in particular contexts of significance. Certainly, this conceptualization is yielded by the unity of relations within a structure of referentiality. Beings are discovered "with regard to the fact that they are referred, as those beings which they are, to something" (BT 84). Beings, as objects of use, refer to each other and in this way form a structured whole of signification—not just a collection of entities. The "wherein" of this referential context is the phenomenon of the world. Such an understanding of the referential context is peculiar to Da-sein; therefore, the phenomenon of the world, as it is revealed to us, is impossible without Da-sein. Moreover, Da-sein encounters itself only in the world that it takes care of. In other words, any self-consciousness or self-knowledge prior to one's encounter and taking care of the beings and other people is inconceivable. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. Since there is nothing to be conscious of prior to Da-sein's being-in-the-world, it develops an understanding of itself and the world only in relation with the beings and persons around it. Da-sein's being is essentially being-with and therefore its self-knowledge cannot be devoid from an understanding of the world.

Even though Da-sein initially finds and understands itself in its relation with the things and people around it, still, this understanding is not sufficient for it to be *itself*. Heidegger suggests that

One's own Da-sein... is encountered, initially and for the most part, in terms of the world-together in the surrounding world taken care of. In being absorbed in the world of taking care of things, that is, at the same time in being-with toward others, Da-sein is not itself (BT 125).

Who is it then?

(3.5) Being-with-Others and Inauthenticity of Da-sein

Da-sein is always already with others for its being is essentially being-with (BT 120). Yet, the term "being-with-others" basically does *not* signify a physical proximity. Da-sein's being, even when it is completely alone and away from all people, is existentially determined by being-with (BT 120). Since Da-sein's being-

with as an ontological category allows for and lays out the possibility of its encounter with others, Da-sein (as a social being and as a being that cares about beings), as far as it is, can *never be not-being-with* (BT 121). Therefore, being alone can only be a deficient mode of Da-sein's being-with others.

On the other hand, Da-sein's being-with others must be differentiated from its being-with beings. Da-sein's relation with the beings can be understood as a matter of care. Its being-with others, however, is a different sort of taking care, which Heidegger calls *concern*. Such a distinction is not only meaningful, but also necessary since Da-sein's relation to other people is not one of using, manipulating, producing, etc. Therefore, Da-sein basically does not treat other people as mere beings scattered into the world but as Da-seins who have the same kind of being as itself. Concern discloses the being of others. In fact, the existence and disclosedness of others are involved in constituting significance. In this way, others do not appear as entities attached to the world, rather, they reveal themselves in the world as they help to constitute significance (BT 123). Therefore, Da-sein, because its being is being-with, has an initial understanding of others.

For Heidegger, in everyday life Da-sein has always already been *fallen*, in an *inauthentic* mode of being. That is, it is away from itself, immersed in the world it takes care of. And the daily concerns, idle talk, and curiosity of everydayness prevents it from focusing on its own self, its own thoughts, its own understanding of world, and its potentiality of being. It surrenders to the average understanding and morale of the other people, i.e., "the they" (*das Man*), (and also becomes inseparable from "the they") which is always far from providing a genuine insight into the world and being. Da-sein's being-in-the-world is initially and for the most part absorbed in the world, in other words, it belongs to the they (BT 126).

The they does not refer to any particular person or any specific group of people. It is nobody, not a concrete individual that we can identify, but everyone—as it is clearly expressed in statistical terms like "the man on the street," or "the average American housewife." When we ask who actually this man or this woman is, we cannot get an exact answer. It is no one, yet it may, at the same time, refer to

everyone. The *who* of Da-sein, therefore, is *the they*—nobody but everyone at the same time. In other words, “initially, ‘I’ ‘am’ not in the sense of my own self, but I am the others in the mode of the they” (BT 129).

The they is all the time informed by hearsay, see the world from a populist perspective and never worry about discovering the source of the events or learning the truth of the information in circulation. There is no need to worry about such things, for the they always looks for what is new. The they are so curious that they easily get bored with what is old: they are always seeking something new, and having something interesting to talk about is the most important thing for them. Therefore, nothing becomes the permanent object of their attention; everything just comes and goes, and is no more than a mere entertainment for the they. In their average and shallow understanding, everything is so obvious and clear to them that the they never ever wonder about the truth of anything. The average understanding of being is safe and sufficient for them. It is safe—for it does not lead one to the dark corridors of the maze of thinking. It is sufficient—because the average understanding fulfills their curiosity and entertains them without jeopardizing the complacent tranquility and routine of everydayness. The they, hence, touch upon only the surface of things, and, accordingly, their comprehension of the world cannot penetrate beyond skin-deep.

The they exercise their tyranny by imposing their own tastes, opinions, values and ideas on Da-sein. The they do not give Da-sein (as long as the latter is totally immersed into them) the opportunity to think for itself and adopt its own point of view. Nor they are interested in the differences and peculiarities of individuals. Rather, the they prefer to create and focus on agreement in order to avoid anxiety and confusion in individuals, and conflicts, arguments among people. For all such things will definitely prevent Da-sein from focusing on its job and having an inner peace in daily life. Da-sein, therefore, initially belongs to them and, is almost always one of them in order to survive (for its contact with other people in everydayness is essential and not dispensable) and not to be singled out in everyday life. In this way, the they creates averageness and maintains it by determining and defining what is acceptable, what is right, what is valuable, what is successful and what is not (BT 126). Daily life

is, thus, under the domination of other people, and Da-sein (being one of them), in no way can free itself from them completely.

The they, moreover, creates ambiguities—everything genuine and authentic is reduced to averageness by the chatter and temporary attention informed by the curiosity of the they. The idle talk of the they “by its very nature, ...is a closing off, since it *omits* going back to the foundation of what is being talked about” (BT 169). It is assumed that in idle talk everything is understood and there is no need to question further. In this way, Da-sein, as they-self, does not understand what actually is of importance and what is not for everything is treated more or less in the same way and interpreted averagely and ambiguously without any intention of getting their genuine meaning. Da-sein, as they-self, understanding “everything” and “certain” of itself and everything it understands, is tranquilized—for in its life everything is perfectly ordered (BT 177). Tranquilized Da-sein is not pacified, on the contrary it always keeps itself busy with various things, jobs, etc. in order not to feel any abyss, boredom, meaninglessness and nothingness in its life. It constantly occupies itself with this and that in order not to feel itself alone and aimless. As Jules Renard noted in his journal, “The only excuse for working is the fear of boredom.”

Da-sein, who understands everything, and in its average understanding interprets everything in the same averageness “thus compares itself with everything, it drifts toward an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality for being-in-the-world is concealed” (BT 178). Hence, in everydayness Da-sein is not only tranquilized, but also alienated from itself (and therefore drifted away from its authentic self and the authentic possibilities of its being). Da-sein, tranquilized and fallen prey to the they, does not see the *inauthenticity* and averageness of everyday interpretation of being—the public interpretation of the world hides and makes the authentic possibilities of its being invisible to Da-sein (BT 178). Thus, Da-sein cannot project its authentic possibilities but is tranquilized with the (hollow) victories of everyday life. Inauthentic Da-sein is a flight from itself—a refusal to encounter the world alone, to face the authentic possibilities of its being, to make its own choices and therefore to be oneself for the alienating comfort of the they.

Heidegger warns us that the they should not be understood in a simply negative sense. As Heidegger puts it "*The they is an existential and belongs as a primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of Da-sein*" (BT 129). Da-sein's facticity is also not hurt by its surrender to the they. Heidegger's analysis is an ontological one, which is not directed by the concern of telling people what is the "way," or how should and should not they do.¹⁷ Rather, the objective of his pointing out the "nature" of the they is for the purpose of explicating the everyday being of Da-sein in which initially and for the most part it finds itself, and in which for the first time it gets the slightest understanding of being. Hence, Da-sein's being-with the they is a reality, which cannot be bypassed, replaced or discarded by any theoretical (scientific, anthropological, sociological, psychological, etc.) "better" explanation. The fundamentality of Da-sein's initially being a they-self cannot be denied—for Da-sein initially finds the possibility of access to and production of theoretical knowledge in the they. Da-sein first encounters, hears about, and discovers the possibility of a more authentic understanding of the world in the averageness of daily chatter. Thus, it is unwise to say that the everyday being of Da-sein is totally useless and that it should be completely avoided if possible. In fact, Da-sein *can* fall prey to the they and daily interpretation of the world only because it is attuned and understands being (BT 179).

Da-sein, in its being with the they, is "they-self," it already finds itself with others. In fact, it is always with-others, even when it is away from them, since being-with-others is not about being in physical proximity, or being together with people. Instead, it means Da-sein's ability to have an initial understanding of the world, communicate with others, speak a language, learn how to stay alive, how to do certain things, have moral values, and so on. This means that Da-sein is initially they-self; whenever it first becomes conscious of itself, its environment, and the world in which it lives, it accesses the world in terms of the language and the world as it is constructed by the society. As Heidegger explains, "In terms of the they, and as the they, I am initially 'given' to 'myself.' Initially Da-sein is they-self and for the most part it remains so" (BT 129).

¹⁷ Even though *BT* is not a book of ontology rather than ethics, I think that, still, it is possible to find an ethical tone in it.

Yet, to gain an authentic understanding of the world, and, therefore, to be its own self, Da-sein has to put some distance between itself and the they and try to remove the obscurities and ambiguities that the they created. However, even in the mode of authenticity, still, Da-sein is not detached from the they. Rather, "[a]uthentic being of one's self is not based on an exceptional state of the subject, a state detached from the they, but is an *existentiell* modification of the they..." (BT 130). In other words, Da-sein's authentic being is based on its inauthentic self and is possible not as a complete departure from this initial state to a "better" or "higher" one, but as modifying and re-interpreting the they, they-self, and one's relation with them in a more authentic fashion.

Heidegger also emphasizes the point that even though authenticity is a possibility for Da-sein, inauthenticity is not a "lesser" mode of being of Da-sein (BT 43). Da-sein is inauthentic whenever it does not think of its own being and rather loses itself in the things or jobs that it keeps itself busy with them. In fact, the existentiality of Da-sein is already present even in the least authentic mode of Da-sein, for even in the averageness of everyday life, Da-sein is still concerned with its own being. Yet, this concern is mostly a negative and deficient one—a relation with one's own being by forgetting and escaping from it. Initially and for the most part Da-sein is in inauthentic mode, is immersed in daily routine and concerns. Nevertheless, such a forgetting of oneself is an inevitability, rather than being a deficiency of Da-sein's being. Initially and most of the time Da-sein is inauthentic, for in order to stay alive, it has to deal with all kinds of practical problems and focus on its daily activities. After all, the authentic being of Da-sein grows out of the average everyday being of Da-sein—and returns to it. Da-sein, so far as it exists, is in an authentic or inauthentic mode, or it might be in modal indifference to them.¹⁸

¹⁸ However, Heidegger does not tell much about Da-sein's modal indifference. He also mentions that both authenticity and inauthenticity of Da-sein could be genuine or not genuine but, again, does not explicate them in detail.

(3.6) *Angst: A Path from Inauthenticity to Authenticity*

Da-sein's self is initially and for the most part inauthentic; it is they-self. In this inauthentic mode Da-sein is not fully disclosed to itself. Its relation with itself is a flight from, an evading of encountering its own very self. For a full self-disclosure, that is, a clear, authentic understanding of its own potentiality of being, a special kind of attunement is needed. This attunement of Da-sein Heidegger calls *Angst*. In terms of *Angst* is disclosed the whole of Da-sein's condition (i.e., its thrownness and the limitations of its being) and the contingency of its worldly existence.

Heidegger notes that *Angst* must be distinguished from the feeling of fear; for it does not have an object in particular, it is not fear of anything. In contrast to fear, *Angst* is about *nothing*, the nothingness of, the null ground of Da-sein's being. Yet, what *Angst* is all about and the meaning of the null ground of Da-sein needs to be further explicated.

(3.6.1) *Angst About Nothing*

So, what is *Angst* about? What is its object? The answer is *nothing*. *Angst*, as a fundamental attunement of Da-sein, does not have an object. What it is about is uncertain for there is no particular thing in *Angst* that threatens Da-sein. What makes Da-sein anxious is the worldliness of the world as such, which means that,

[t]he utter insignificance which makes itself known in the nothing and nowhere does not signify the absence of world, but means that innerworldly beings in themselves are so completely unimportant that, on the basis of this *insignificance* of what is innerworldly, the world is all that obtrudes itself in its innerworldliness (BT 187).

If *Angst* is about the world, the source of Da-sein's anxiety is its being-in-the-world (BT 187). That is, in *Angst*, Da-sein is anxious *about* nothing but its own being or, put in better terms, the nullity of its own being. Yet it is also anxious *for* its being—for it realizes that its being is being-possible and that it always in this or that way projects itself upon the possibilities of its being. For anxious Da-sein relations with particular persons and objects fade away and it cannot understand itself and

interpret the world as the they did (BT 187). In Angst, Da-sein grasps its lostness in the they, the fallenness of the orderliness and tranquility of everyday life; hence in this disturbing state it is drifted away from the they and cannot benefit from the tranquilizing comfort of being they-self. For, in this anxious state it sees that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its being.

(3.6.2) The Null Ground of Da-sein's Being

Let us note at the outset that what Heidegger means by nullity or the nothingness of being is not a sort of nihilism. He does not argue that Da-sein's life and being are totally meaningless and there is no point in pursuing one's life.¹⁹ On the contrary, he argues that Da-sein's existence is only for its own sake (which, I think, comes to mean that the reason, meaning, and value of its worldly existence lie only in itself). Da-sein is essentially the being that understands and interprets, it does not find meaning outside, but discloses it in and through its own interpretive act. I think that the nothingness or the null basis of Da-sein's being can be interpreted in three ways.

First of all, Da-sein finds itself thrown into the world. In order to survive, and to be a self, it has to build upon what is initially given to it in this thrownness. In this sense, in its thrownness the basis of Da-sein's being is null, for it does not have power to change or determine the basis of its being (BT 284). Da-sein finds itself in the midst of a world over which it does not have absolute control. In choosing itself, Da-sein "can only freely adhere to, accept, embrace, its own unchosen thrown basis. Such a choosing is never once and done, never attains its goal in one fell swoop, but progresses in its own open-ended process of adherence, acceptance and resolve" (DRB 324).

Second, Da-sein's being is null for its being and self are neither given to it, nor predetermined; Da-sein has to constitute its very self out of this indeterminateness. Yet, whenever Da-sein makes a choice, it gives up other possibilities. It can never

¹⁹ Moreover, despite Heidegger's emphasis on death and the significance he gives to death in *BT*, he mentions suicide only once, on page 229.

realize all of its possibilities and this powerlessness of Da-sein marks the nullity of its being (BT 285).

Third, Da-sein's being is being-in-the-world and it is a mortal being. The temporality of its worldly being proves to be null since it is destined to disappear, to be "nothing." Mortality of its being also proves the powerlessness of Da-sein—it can only "be" as long as it lives, but whenever it is dead, it is not, its being is also not anymore.

(3.6.3) Angst and Da-sein's Individualization

The upshot is that Da-sein is not at home. Anxious Da-sein sees that the way it has understood the world and its own very being actually does not belong to it—but to the they. This familiar interpretation of the world vanishes and all the definitions and judgments it has produced vanish with it as well. Angst, by distancing Da-sein from public interpretation and fallenness, "takes away from Da-sein the possibility of understanding itself, falling prey, in terms of the 'world' and the public way of being interpreted" (BT 187). It shakes off the conceptions and ideas given to it by the they, frees itself from all their impositions, value judgments about life and the world. In this way, Da-sein encounters the world alone.

Hence, Angst individuates Da-sein: now it is free from public interpretation and completely alone. It is alone for it cannot tell about its Angst, it cannot share it with its friends—no one would understand it for it is not something one can adequately express in daily language. Da-sein's world has fallen apart and the they, immersed in the tranquilizing social world, cannot share this particular Da-sein's anxiety for its being. Thus, it faces the nothingness of the world—it has lost the meaning, and no one can help it at this moment. The individualization

reveals to [Da-sein] authenticity and inauthenticity as possibilities of its being. The fundamental possibilities of Da-sein, which are always my own, show themselves in *Angst* as they are, undistorted by innerworldly beings to which Da-sein, initially and for the most part, clings (BT 191).

Da-sein itself is essentially freedom; however, by freeing itself from the they and public interpretation, it sees the things as themselves and realizes the possibilities of its being in its being-anxious. By distancing itself from the they, it ceases to assess itself in terms of their values, compare itself with other Da-seins and understands that it is free to realize any of its possibilities that were covered over by public interpretation. It no longer consults with other people nor wants to refer to the public interpretation. Therefore, Da-sein is "actually" free only if it frees itself from the tyranny of the they. That is, it sees the possibilities of its own being in an authentic way by freeing itself from the they.

In this mood Da-sein, who is essentially an interpretive being, sees the possibility of building its own perspective and interpretation. In this way, the world and all the possibilities of its being are disclosed to Da-sein in their entirety. It starts to see the world from a different perspective. This realization contains Da-sein's potential to be an authentic self whose understanding originates from its own self as such, who chooses the possibilities of its own being and makes its own decisions freely from the they.

Why does Da-sein find itself in the anxious mood? What is the condition of this phenomenon? Heidegger suggests that Angst is not just one mood among the others but is "a fundamental kind of attunement that belongs to the essential constitution of Da-sein" (BT 189). It is fundamental, in two different senses of the word.

First, Heidegger argues that Da-sein is anxious only because "Angst always already latently determines being-in-the-world" (BT 189). In other words, not-being-at-home is a more fundamental existential and ontological characteristic of Da-sein's being. Essentially the basis of its being is null. This is so, for Da-sein initially finds itself thrown and dispersed into the world—and it builds a personality by its (authentic and inauthentic) choices and acts. In this way, it tries to build itself a home (i.e., a familiar world), but essentially it is homeless (for initially we find ourselves in a world, in the midst of an ongoing historical process which follows its own way regardless of our individual presence or absence).

Second, the world is always already disclosed to Da-sein, but it is revealed to Da-sein in its entirety in Angst. Angst individualizes Da-sein and discloses all possibilities of its being, and in this respect it is a fundamental attunement of Da-sein. Such a disclosure is possible because Da-sein is always already ahead of itself; that is, it is always already concerned about the future and potentiality of its being (even in its inauthentic mode) (*BT* 192). This is the characteristic of its being-in-the-world, which is fully disclosed to Da-sein in Angst.

However, given that what we described up to now is the basic structure and inauthentic being of Da-sein, there is more to say about its authentic being. This is because even though we identified Angst as the fundamental attunement that discloses the world in its entirety and thus all of Da-sein's possibilities, still, Angst itself is not sufficient to explicate how Da-sein chooses to be an authentically self-constituting being. Da-sein, even if all its possibilities are revealed to it and sees the nothingness of the world, still needs to make a leap forward for authenticity (i.e., it must want to have a conscience). There is a decision it has to make: it will choose either to be an authentic self by projecting itself on the authentic possibilities of its being, which amounts to "becoming what one can be in being free for one's ownmost possibilities (project)" (*BT* 199), or it will refuse to do so.

Until now, Da-sein's everyday inauthentic self and its existential structures have been explicated to disclose Heidegger's understanding of human existence. In order to show how an authentic being of Da-sein is possible, now we can concentrate on Heidegger's understanding of death and the role it plays in Da-sein's becoming an authentic self.

Chapter 4: Da-sein's Being as "Death-in-Life"

(4.1) *Death and Da-sein as an Interpretative Being*

As mentioned before, the objective of Heidegger's analysis is getting a proper understanding the meaning of being. In order to do this, the first task is to provide an existential analysis of Da-sein in its wholeness. Yet, as we have also mentioned, such an understanding does not aim at comprehending Da-sein's being in its end, i.e., in the moment of death, but understanding different aspects of Da-sein's being existentially. So, a proper understanding of authentic being of Da-sein is part of Heidegger's project.

As long as Da-sein *is*, it is never complete, but always more than what it is (that is, it is always its own possibilities) and it is always up to something—even in its laziest, aimless and hopeless mood. It is always incomplete and has a future ahead of itself, which is not yet realized. For,

[t]he primary factor of care, "being ahead of itself"... means that Da-sein always exists for the sake of itself. "As long as it is," up until its end, it is related to its potentiality-of-being.... This structural factor of care tells us unambiguously that something is always still *outstanding* in Da-sein which has not yet become "real" as a potentiality-of-its-being. *A constant unfinished quality* thus lies in the essence of the constitution of Da-sein. This lack of totality means that there is still something outstanding in one's potentiality-for-being (BT 236).

That is, Da-sein "always already exists in such a way that its not-yet *belongs* to it" (BT 243). Da-sein is its possibilities and it understands itself in terms of its possibilities. It always projects itself in this or that way on its (authentic or inauthentic) possibilities. Da-sein is able to project itself for it always already has an understanding of the world and "significance." Yet the way it projects itself is determined by its self-understanding and the way it relates itself to the objects around it. At this point the issue of authenticity and inauthenticity is of paramount importance, for Da-sein can project itself upon its authentic possibilities and "become what it is" or fails to do so and cannot "find itself." Yet, in any case it always projects itself upon its existentiell possibilities of being. The limits of its possibilities are drawn by the situation it is

thrown into.²⁰ Understanding alone does not relate Da-sein to its possibilities, in order to do this Da-sein should appropriate its understanding, by seeing things as something, that is, interpreting them for a practical purpose. This means that Da-sein is essentially an interpretative being for in order to disclose its possibilities of being and project itself on these possibilities it must engage in interpretation.

But what is the relation between death and Da-sein's being an interpretive being? First of all, Da-sein can authentically project itself on its possibilities only when its authentic possibilities are disclosed. Such a disclosure is possible only in some "privileged" disclosures such as Angst in which Da-sein confronts the limitations of its being authentically. Death is a limit, boundary situations of Da-sein with an authentic confrontation of which it grasps its condition as a whole. Yet death is not any limit, but is the ultimate limit of its existence and a possibility of meaning for Da-sein.

Therefore, for Heidegger, death is not just an ontic event, in other words, it is more than a mere ontic limit of being of Da-sein, but in fact constitutes an existential limit. This crucial difference between ontic and ontological meaning of death needs to be clearly accentuated.

(4.2) Death as an Event vs. Death as an Ontological Phenomenon

Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* considers death not as an event or a human experience but as the end of one's being or one's world. He asserts that, "Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through" (TLP 6.4311). For in death Da-sein's world does not change but ceases; at the moment of death, in the absence of Da-sein, the world "is not" anymore for Da-sein (TLP 6.431). For Heidegger, ontically, death is an event that marks the end of Da-sein's life, whereas ontologically it comes to mean the possibility of non-existence of being. Ontologically understood, the possibility of death,

²⁰ However, these limits (historical, natural, etc. and boundary situations) are *not limitations* because no human existence can be limitless.

[t]his non-relational ownmost possibility is at the same time the most extreme one. As a potentiality of being, Da-sein is unable to bypass the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein. Thus *death* reveals itself as the *ownmost non-relational possibility not to be bypassed* (BT 250).

Death is the "non-relational" possibility of Da-sein because in facing with one's death, all Da-sein's relations with other people or with other things lose their significance. Da-sein is so concerned with its being and with the idea of how to live the rest of its life that all daily concerns and worries seem so unimportant and meaningless. How can, for example, the question of which car to buy, which job to apply for, or earning more money can be more important than the truth that one's being is mortal and therefore one has a limited amount of time to be the person one can be, that is, to authentically choose among the possibilities of one's being.

Death is also the "ownmost" possibility of my being, because it is a possibility which is essentially mine. All other possibilities of mine are contingent and fleeting. I may or may not eat my lunch in this restaurant, study mathematics, work in a large company, learn to play tennis, etc. Some of one's possibilities might be possible in certain periods in one's life (bearing a child, studying for an important exam, etc.), and some are contingent to the realization of some other possibilities (learning advanced mathematics, being a world famous tennis player, etc.). Death, however, is the possibility which is always possible and always mine; once I was born, my existence can end in any moment. Even when I am alive, I am dying, running out of time and getting nearer to the moment of my death. That is, death is never away from, separate from my being.

Since death is a boundary situation, an *a priori* limit of my existence, awareness of death discloses all possibilities of Da-sein's being, i.e., its existence as a whole. An authentic confrontation with the final possibility of being makes other possibilities more visible and significant for knowing that one is running out of time hastens him to lay out all the possibilities and authentically choose among them.

(4.3) *The Hidden Meaning of the Phenomenon of Death*

✓ Heidegger introduces the concept of death in the Second Division of *BT*. Although he mentions death at one or two points in the previous chapters of the book, he leaves the task of giving a complete account of this phenomenon to his discussion of temporality which he deals with in the Second Division. In the first section Heidegger mainly talks about Da-sein's inauthentic modes of being which is signified by the notions of "thrownness," "being-with-others" and "being-with-other-beings" which are, in a sense the most basic modes of human existence. They are basic and inescapable because we, human beings, first find ourselves, as existing in an inauthentic way. That is, Da-sein's selfhood is initially and for the most part shaped and controlled by daily concerns, its relationship with people around it and by the daily activities like working, watching television, doing housework, etc. According to Heidegger, this mode of being is not reproachable, nor avoidable. Rather, it lays the proper ground not only for pursuing our lives, but also for realizing our existence in an authentic mode. Since Da-sein, even in its most authentic mode, is still in contact with the beings and with other people (i.e., its being is in any case being-with), the inauthentic mode of life is significant for Da-sein to survive. This also implies that Da-sein can in no way lead a purely authentic life. For in order to have an authentic understanding of being, first and foremost it has to be in-the-world—to be with beings and with others. Hence, inauthenticity is the condition of the possibility of an authentic mode of Da-sein.

In the Second Division, Heidegger focuses more on the issue of the temporality of being of Da-sein and Da-sein's authentic mode of being. He prefers to introduce and analyze the phenomenon of death in this section in relation with authentic mode of being of Da-sein because Da-sein can only become fully aware of the temporality of its own existence by means of an understanding of its own death. He asserts that "dying is not an event, but a phenomenon to be understood existentially in an eminent sense still to be delineated more closely" (*BT* 240).

Da-sein not only finds itself and becomes a self initially and for the most part in an inauthentic way (in its being-with-others, in care, etc.), but also encounters death for the first time inauthentically. Da-sein "can gain an experience of death, all the more because it is essentially being-with with others," and this experience paves the way for a further ontological analysis of death (BT 237).

First of all, Heidegger claims that death cannot be properly understood as an event. He argues that for Da-sein an experience of death is impossible—both its own and someone else's death. It cannot experience its own death, because in death Da-sein is no-longer-being-there; therefore, Da-sein's own death is not really an experience for it. It might be said that even when it is dead, Da-sein is, still, in a sense, "there;" for its dead body is still there, it is objectively in the world. However, when Da-sein is, its existence cannot be understood as objective existence or presence. Da-sein, in death, undergoes a transition—death is "the *end* of the being qua Da-sein" and it "is the *beginning* of this being qua something objectively present" (BT 238). Since this corporeal being belongs to a being that lost its life, its presence is different from the presence of a stone (BT 238). Yet, it does not have factual existence anymore, i.e., it is not being-there, which means that "the deceased abandoned our 'world' and left it behind. It is in terms of this world that those remaining can still be with him" (BT 238). Therefore, the loss we are talking about is the loss of the ones who are left behind. However, "in suffering the loss, the loss of being as such which the dying person 'suffers' does not become accessible" (BT 239). Ontologically, Heidegger suggests, experience of death as the observation of another person's decease does not belong to the essence of Da-sein, and thus does not give the meaning of death. Observation of other's death "fails to recognize the kind of being of Da-sein" because death, in this case, is not "mine," but belongs to someone else (BT 239). It is, after all, other's death. If one thinks that one can experience someone else's death, she assumes that she can replace herself with the dying person. Nonetheless, even if in daily life we can do a lot of job in substitute for other people and replace one person with another, in death we cannot do anything like this. In front of death, no one can represent someone else. Since "'ending,' as dying, constitutes the totality of

Da-sein, the being of the totality itself must be conceived as an existential phenomenon of my own Da-sein. In 'ending,' and in the totality thus constituted of Da-sein, there is essentially no representation" (BT 240). Consequently, if we are to understand death ontologically, we cannot consider it as an event or as someone else's death; rather, a genuine understanding of death requires an authentic understanding.

Yet, what Heidegger means when he says Da-sein gets its completion in death and whenever Da-sein is, it "always already is its not-yet" should be qualified (BT 244). If death is the end of Da-sein's life and existence, then what kind of end is it? Does that mean that Da-sein's completion is like summing the pieces of a whole or is it like the ripening of a fruit—that is, a fulfillment of the natural course of its existence? Or, does death limit Da-sein's existence like a frame that limits the picture? Heidegger clearly excludes these kinds of understanding of completion of Da-sein because the way they represent "end" is thinkable only for objects that exist as present or at hand (BT 245). Whereas, as mentioned before, Da-sein's existence cannot be reduced to and understood as objective presence and, as a result, its completion cannot be properly understood in the same way as the completion of an objectively present being. Death is the limit for Da-sein's existence, and, moreover, "Being-'there' implies the potential for not being-'there'" (HEM 4). Consequently,

as Da-sein constantly already is its not-yet as long as it is, it also always is its end. The ending that we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify a being-at-an-end of Da-sein, but (death as dying) rather a being toward the end of this being. Death is a way to be that Da-sein takes over as soon as it is (BT 245).

Heidegger, even though he does not deny the ontic biological dimension of the phenomenon of death, is reluctant to reduce death to a biological event as well. The biological basis of death could also be investigated, because "we must still ask how the essence of death is defined in terms of the essence of life" (BT 247). Such an undertaking, of course, requires an ontology of Da-sein which has priority over both the ontology of life and of death. In any case, an ontological understanding of death has priority over any kind of biological, ethnological and psychological explanation.

I think that one of the important points regarding Heidegger's conception of death is his reluctance to offer an account of afterlife. Since he is interested in death

as the end of Da-sein's being-in-the-world, in other words, as the avoidance of Da-sein's existence in the world, he does not tell anything about what happens after death, and does not address the question whether there is life after death or not. This is an understandable attitude; we do not and cannot know whether there is any after-worldly life for Da-sein or not. Such knowledge is completely out of reach of human intelligence. One may believe that there is or there is not life after death; or one may believe in the immortality of human soul or existence. However, such beliefs and suppositions, from Heidegger's point of view, cannot have a place in an ontological investigation. If we aimed at unveiling the meaning of being, then the objective of our investigation will be to explicate the inner-worldly being of Da-sein. The term "Da-sein," which literally means "there-to be" hints at this point. Given Heidegger's philosophy of Da-sein, an "otherworldly" existence or "afterlife" would be unintelligible to us. We can think of being-there, the inner-worldly existence. However, theorizing about what happens to Da-sein when it is not-being-there-anymore is both unjustified and ungrounded. We cannot have any accurate knowledge of the possibility of any otherworldly experience, so it is not justified to make any assertions about otherworldly human experience. Heidegger clearly states that his

analysis of death remains purely "this-worldly" in that it interprets the phenomenon solely with respect to the question of how it *enters into* actual Da-sein as its possibility-of-being. We cannot even *ask* with any methodological assurance about what "*is after death*" until death is understood in its full ontological essence. Whether such a question presents a possible *theoretical* question at all is not to be decided here. The this-worldly, ontological interpretation of death comes before any ontic, other-worldly speculation (BT 248).

So, Heidegger's analysis provides a this-worldly, ontological understanding of death; for Heidegger death is not "something not yet objectively present, nor the last outstanding element reduced to a minimum, but rather an imminence" (BT 250). Yet, the imminence of death is, of course, considerably different from the imminence of any other thing, like moving to a new city, departure of a ship from the harbor, etc. All these events are accidental; it is possible for us to imagine that they could have been otherwise. In contrast, the imminence of death cannot be thought as an accidental event in one's life. On the contrary, it is the most imminent thing in the

existence of Da-sein. We cannot imagine that Da-sein will never die, or death is not part of its own existence; we cannot say that it could have been otherwise. Since death is a fundamental characteristic of Da-sein, it is the most imminent possibility as the possibility of Da-sein to be no-longer-to-be-able-to-be-there. It appears as the unavoidable, unsurpassable possibility of being of Da-sein. It does not itself choose or create this possibility, "when Da-sein exists, it is already *thrown* into this possibility" (BT 251).

The imminence of death, on the other hand, does not imply that the time of Da-sein's death is certain. It implies only that Da-sein is finite, and the end of its existence is imminent to its being. Da-sein can defer its own death (by letting someone else die instead of itself in certain situations, or by taking medication to slow down the effects of a fatal disease), or it can die immaturally, but in any case, as long as Da-sein is, the imminence of death is certain.

Actually Da-sein is initially not aware of the fact that death is the most imminent possibility of its being (or non-being); Da-sein is not beforehand conscious of its thrownness to death. This fact could be disclosed to Da-sein in *Angst*, which must be definitely distinguished from just a feeling or fear that Da-sein arbitrarily feels. Rather, it is "a fundamental attunement of Da-sein, the disclosure of the fact that Da-sein exists as thrown being-toward-its-end. Thus the existential concept of dying is clarified as thrown being toward the ownmost non-relational potentiality-of-being not to be bypassed" (BT 251).

The fact that not everybody experiences a genuine anxiety does not entail that Heidegger is wrong in making such an assertion that being-toward-death belongs to the fundamental constitution of Da-sein. This only shows that Da-sein, in general, tends to forget and tries to avoid the idea that death is the final possibility of its own being. In this way, Da-sein is inclined to see death merely as an ontic event as everybody (i.e., the they) in everyday life understands it. So, Da-sein initially and for the most part falls prey to the they (or gets absorbed to the public average interpretation characterized by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity) and refuses to face with its own mortality and temporality of its own being. So, immersed into the they,

Da-sein's life is ruled by average understanding of being; it is scattered, distracted and unfocused. This is the general attitude of the self of the everyday life—since it interprets the world and itself in idle talk, its interpretation of death is also defined by idle talk of the they (*BT* 252). That is, as a familiar, mere fact. Death is, for the they, an ordinary event that happens in the world—but not to me, always to other people. Of course, we will all die in the end, but now, it is far from us, and not a threat for our existence. Death, in public interpretation, appears as an event which belongs to no one at all. For, “[t]he public interpretation of Da-sein says that ‘one dies’ because in this way everybody can convince him/herself that in no case is it I myself, for this one is *no one*. ‘Dying’ is leveled down to an event which does concern Da-sein, but which belongs to no one in particular” (*BT* 253).

It is certain that we all know that we are mortal, and one day we all are going to die. This sounds more like a truism rather than a piece of knowledge. Sometimes we observe other people's death or hear the death of someone we are acquainted with. In this way, we acquire an idea about death. However, all this kind of understanding or knowledge of death is about others' death, which means that we are familiar with the idea of death only as something that happens to other people—not to us. We know it, but we know it as something that does not belong to us and far away from us. Accordingly, common people's attitude toward death is formed in accordance with it: consoling not only the dying person, but also others and oneself that actually we, all of us, are not dying. If this is so, then we should not let an event like death to interrupt our daily routine.

A perfect example of the main idea of Heidegger's account, as he refers in a brief note on page 254 in *BT*, could be found in Leo Tolstoy's story “Death of Ivan Ilych.” The story begins with depicting various scenes from Ivan Ilych's house after his death. His friends go to pay a visit to his family, his wife cries and mourns, some friends and relatives trying to console her, the proper religious rituals are being performed, etc. Ivan Ilych's dead body is lying in a coffin waiting to be buried. However, we notice that despite the unpleasantness and the feeling of dread evoked by

his death, actually his family and friends are basically concerned with their own lives and future.

Besides considerations as to the possible transfers and promotions likely to result from Ivan Ilych's death, the mere fact of the death of a near acquaintance aroused, as usual, in all who heard of it the complacent feeling that, "it is he who is dead and not I." Each one thought or felt, "Well, he's dead but I'm alive!" But the more intimate of Ivan Ilych's acquaintances, his so-called friends, could not help thinking also that they would now have to fulfill the very tiresome demands of propriety by attending the funeral service and paying a visit of condolence to the widow (DII 96-97).

As Tolstoy aptly portrays, the tragedy and truth of death, or death of the other, is concealed by the fact that life goes on for the people who are still alive and the concerns and interests of their lives surpass the impact of others' death. Such concerns not only drift people away from pondering upon death, but also make each of them think that he/she is so lucky because it is "he" who is dead now—not I. Humans, immersed into the daily concerns and must-dos of their lives, forget the significance of death. Besides, in order to focus on these concerns, they also have to stay away from the thought of death which will depress and overwhelm them. Instead, they occupy themselves with their daily activities and with the concerns of this life. In this way, the terribleness of death, the depression its thought will evoke and the thought of the possibility and inevitability of one's own death are repressed and left in the waters of oblivion. Even the idea of the unavoidability and constant possibility of one's own death is carefully and perfectly veiled and washed out of the everyday being of Da-sein. As Peter Ivanovic, a friend and colleague of Ivan Ilych thinks upon Ilych's death:

"Three days of frightful suffering and then death! Why, that might suddenly, at any time, happen to me," he thought, and for a moment felt terrified. But—he himself did not know how—the customary reflection at once occurred to him that this had happened to Ivan Ilych and not to him, and that it should not and could not happen to him, and that to think that it could would be yielding to depression which he ought not to do, as Schwartz's expression plainly showed. After which reflection Peter Ivanovic felt assured, and began to ask with interest about the details of Ivan Ilych's death, as though death as an accident natural to Ivan Ilych but certainly no to himself (DII 102).

The public interpretation of death is ambiguous—for it conceives death as an event which belongs neither to Da-sein, the self, nor to someone else. The ambiguity

of public interpretation lies exactly here. The ambiguity in the public understanding of death is also a reflection of the presence of the ambiguity in public interpretation in general. Death, in idle talk, is turned into an event that is often observed in daily life. Since this public interpretation always takes death as an event that occurs in life, and as something real, it fails to see it as a possibility. So does Da-sein. This public understanding of death drifts Da-sein away from an authentic understanding of its own death and also of the temporal and mortal character of its own being. Hence, Da-sein is overwhelmed by this public interpretation of death—and cannot overcome it. Under the prevalence and dominance of public interpretation, Da-sein, most of the time, cannot free itself from it. As Ivan Ilych, rejecting to encounter his death authentically, reflects on his own understanding of death when he realizes that his incurable sickness is killing him:

The syllogism that he learnt from Kiezwetter's Logic: "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal," had always seemed to him correct as applied to Caius, but certainly not applied to himself. That Caius—man in the abstraction—was mortal, was perfectly correct, but he was not Caius, not an abstract man, but a creature quite, quite separate from all others. He had Mitya and Volodya, with the toys, a coachman and a nurse, afterwards with Katenka and with all the joys, griefs, and delights of childhood, boyhood, and youth. What did Caius know of the smell of that striped leather ball Vanya had been so fond of? Had Caius kissed his mother's hand like that, and did the silk of her dress rustle so for Caius? ... "Caius really was mortal, and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Vanya, Ivan Ilych, with all my thoughts and emotions, it's altogether a different matter. It cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too terrible" (*DII* 131-132).

Ivan Ilych, knowing that he is dying, finds this idea strange and cannot get accustomed to it. Unable to free himself from the common interpretation, he refuses to understand and accept his own death. He thinks that,

"If I had to die like Caius I should have known it was so. An inner voice would have told me so, but there was nothing of the sort in me and I and all my friends felt that our case was quite different from that of Caius. And now here it is!" he said to himself. "It can't be. It's impossible! But here it is. How is this? How is one to understand it?" (132)

The they, in order to keep away the anxiety and depression the thought of death will inflict upon them, constantly tranquilize and console themselves and other

people around them. One should keep quiet and not let the thought of death depress her, for it is a sign of cowardice and weakness to let oneself be overwhelmed by the thought of death. In this fashion, Angst is reduced to a mere feeling of fear of an event, and Da-sein is immersed into (and, as implied in the German expression "*das Man*," is actually "one" with) the they; it is imprisoned into the average understanding of his death and perpetually extinguishes the thought of its own death, and dedicates itself to daily concerns and in that way tries to save itself from this condition by finding new screens. In its calm indifference to its own death, Da-sein is estranged from its own most non-relational potentiality-of-being (BT 254). In contrast with public interpretation, factically, Da-sein, as long as it is, is always already dying (BT 254).

Heidegger also argues that Da-sein is, in its average everydayness actually certain about its own death. However, this certainty does *not* guarantee that Da-sein encounters death as the final possibility of its own existence. In other words, Da-sein's certainty of its own death is not sufficient to make death enter into its life. Here, the kind of "being certain about something" is important. We can be certain that today it is going to rain or the sun will rise from the east, but this certainty belongs to the events that we observe in the world. Taking the certainty of death in the same way does not yield a genuine comprehension of one's being as being-toward-death. In other words, the authentic understanding of death Heidegger refers to is not some kind of cognitive comprehension—rather, it is existential. Cognitive comprehension is the comprehension of the events or of the objects that we encounter in the world. In contrast, an existential understanding is an inquiry concerning the ontological structure of a phenomenon, i.e., an investigation that is directed to unveiling the truth of a phenomenon. Despite the fact that the basis of any existential analysis lies in cognitive comprehension of the world (that is, the cognitive comprehension is temporally prior to an existential analysis), an existential analysis differs from it in being in the pursuit of discovering the truth or the true meaning of a phenomenon. Da-sein, "remaining within the empirical certainty which we characterized... cannot become certain at all of death as it 'is'" (BT 257). Since Da-sein knows that it will

certainly die, but at the same time adds that "one day... but not now," it overlooks the truth that in fact death is possible at any moment. Despite the fact that whence of death is uncertain; still, death "is a possibility that is certain, and yet indefinite, that is, possible at any moment" (BT 258).

If Da-sein finds itself stuck to the inauthentic public interpretation of death, how is it possible for it to have an authentic understanding of death? What is the condition of comprehending the essence of death authentically? Authenticity and inauthenticity are not two different entities or dimensions that we attain or fail to attain; rather, they are modes of Da-sein. Da-sein is initially and for the most part inauthentic for "the facticity of Da-sein is such that Da-sein, *as long as* it is what it is, remains in the thrown and is sucked into the eddy of the they's inauthenticity" (BT 179). Being in the authentic mode in no way necessitates leaving the daily life and world behind, or like going out of the cave, as Plato described, to find out the truth outside. Da-sein, even in its most authentic mode, is still in the world and, accordingly, it finds the possibility and basis of the realization of authentic understanding in the world and in the inauthentic everyday understanding. Heidegger argues that,

Inauthenticity has possible authenticity as its basis. Inauthenticity characterizes the kind of being in which Da-sein diverts itself and for the most part has always diverted itself, too, but it does not have to do this necessarily and constantly. Because Da-sein exists, it determines itself as the kind of being it is, and it does so always in terms of a possibility which it itself *is* and understands (BT 259).

Hence, the possibility of authenticity, as Heidegger argues, lies in Da-sein's inauthentic mode of being. Heidegger, by arguing that the possibility of the authentic is the ground of the inauthentic, gives priority to the possible over the actual, and to the future over the present. Now the questions are, how is it possible and what kind of possibility is it?

(4.4) *Da-sein's Authentic Being-Toward-Death*

What differentiates an authentic understanding of death from the average inauthentic understanding is this: Da-sein, who is attuned to an authentic understanding of death, does not flee from the non-relational final possibility of its being, namely, death. That is, Da-sein, by refusing to avoid the thought of its own death, starts to think of death peculiarly as its own death. Any attempt to see death merely as someone else's marks Da-sein's flight from a genuine understanding of death as something belonging to it. In its confrontation with death, Da-sein recognizes death as the final possibility of its own being—for its being is finite, and, accordingly, will inevitably come to an end one day. It is the final possibility for Da-sein because in death all possibilities for Da-sein's being are used up. Once this final possibility is realized, Da-sein's being will not be anymore. Death is Da-sein's own death, that is, it is the possibility that belongs to its own being. Hence, death, by individualizing Da-sein, becomes the non-relational possibility of its being—the possibility that cannot be fully comprehended by thinking one's own being as they-self or being-with-others. In the face of its own death, Da-sein finds itself alone.

Recognizing this possibility means "being toward a possibility, toward an eminent possibility of Da-sein itself" (BT 261). Yet, Da-sein's being toward this possibility cannot be properly understood as an expectation. The act of expectation always has an object or directed to something. However, death is not an object; Da-sein does not expect death as it expects the actualization of any such possibility—like expecting to be a good writer, expecting to see a close friend, expecting to be a world-famous tennis player, etc. Death, in contrast with all other possibilities, is not a possibility; it is the ultimate, ownmost possibility of Da-sein. Besides, death is not just an ontic possibility, something that happens to a physical being, it is an ontological possibility (as an *a priori* ontological limit Da-sein's existence) which means that it is a possibility of meaning rather than being a possibility of action.

Instead, Heidegger calls Da-sein's being toward the possibility of death *anticipation*. Da-sein, understanding its own death in an authentic fashion, does not

expect but anticipate its own death. The point is that in anticipating its own death, Da-sein is not concerned with actualizing the possibility of death; on the contrary, it relates itself to the possibility of its own death *as* possibility. In this realization of the possibility of death, Da-sein understands that it is the nearest, closest, ownmost possibility of its being, for unlike other possibilities, as soon as Da-sein is born, death is always already a possibility of its being. It is the constant possibility which is itself the impossibility of all Da-sein's possibilities. In anticipation, Da-sein clearly understands this truth and recognizes the possibility of death as the constant possibility of its being.

Da-sein, as it authentically understands the possibility of its own death, recognizes its being-toward-death and sees death as the termination of all other possibilities of its own being. Unveiling this possibility of impossibility of Da-sein's existence in anticipation Da-sein "discloses itself to itself with regard to its most extreme possibility" (BT 262). Theretofore, in anticipation, the doors of the possibility of understanding its own existence in an authentic way are open to Da-sein. Yet, this understanding, again, is not mere cognitive comprehension, but "understanding oneself in the potentiality-of-being that reveals itself in the project" (BT 263). That is, an authentic understanding of death changes the way Da-sein perceives itself, the way it makes sense of being and projects itself to the possibilities of its own being. Anticipation, by providing the possibility for authentic understanding, lays out the potentiality of a transformation for Da-sein: authentic understanding transforms not only Da-sein's state of mind (for it changes the way Da-sein conceptualizes its experience), but also, and more importantly, transforms its behavior, its attitude towards life and towards its own being—authentic understanding changes the way Da-sein projects its being by making it disclose to itself the possibilities of its own being. In this mode, Da-sein is extremely concerned with its own being and faced with its own potentiality-of-being. In its encounter with death as the final possibility of its own being, and in disclosing to itself the potentiality of its own being, Da-sein is already drifted away from the they in its anticipation, for "anticipation can always

already have torn itself away from the they" (BT 263). In this separation from the they, Da-sein realizes that its death

does not just "belong" in an undifferentiated way to one's own Da-sein, but it *lays claim* on it as something *individual*. The non-relational character of death understood in anticipation individualizes Da-sein down to itself. This individualizing is a way in which the "there" is disclosed for existence. It reveals the fact that any being-together-with what is taken care of and any being-with the others fails when one's ownmost potentiality-of-being is at stake. Da-sein can *authentically* be *itself* only when it makes that possible of its own accord (BT 263).

Death, by separating Da-sein from the they individualizes it because when Da-sein's being and potentiality of being is the issue, a reference to others, to their values and opinions is not relevant. At that critical point Da-sein finds itself completely alone and has to deal with it on its own. At a moment of vision Da-sein sees that its being is essentially being-toward-death and that it has to face with this truth: it is *able to* change its life. There are two choices. It may leave this truth to forgetfulness and pretend not knowing it. Or it may change its life. In forgetting, it tries to cover over the truth and seeks refuge in the they. If it does so, it never realizes its own self authentically.

Moreover, a proper understanding of death also directs Da-sein to understand its own being and death not as a mere biological phenomenon, but as it is. Ivan Ilych, in the earliest stages of his illness, sees it only as a physiological problem and deals with it accordingly. He thinks that basically he is fine, and this minor ailment could be treated easily; after a while he will be fine again. Yet, as he gets worse, he, worried about his situation, starts to think more deeply about his life and illness. Finally, it dawns on him that it is much more complicated than this:

"Vermiform appendix! Kidney!" he said to himself. "It's not a question of appendix or kidney, but of life and... death. Yes, life was there and now it is going, going and I cannot stop it. Yes. Why deceive myself? Isn't it obvious to everyone but me that I'm dying, and that it's only a question of weeks, days... it may happen this moment. There was life and now there is darkness. I was here and now I'm going there! Where?" A child came over him, his breathing ceased, and he felt only the throbbing of his heart (DII 129-30).

Ilych at that moment realizes that despite the physical and mental discomfort the fatal sickness inflicts on him, he (and people around him as well) has taken life and existence for granted and treated his illness as a mere physical event.

How does Da-sein, in anticipating its own indefinite but certain death, find the courage and power to take the risk and "[open] itself to a constant *threat* arising from its own there?" (BT 265). There is a threat, for once Da-sein encountered the indefiniteness and certainty of death, can it no way completely free itself from the powerful effect of the recognition of this truth. Once Da-sein faces the nothingness of its own being, it cannot completely free itself from this truth—which is not a conscious choice at all. Even if Da-sein forgets it, it haunts Da-sein from time to time, as it did to Ivan Ilych in the form of a fatal sickness: Ivan Ilych, hoping that if he does not think of his own death it will disappear, tries to occupy himself with his usual daily activities which will prevent him from focusing on this depressing and painful thought. He, being a good judge, keeps on pursuing the legal proceedings. Yet, this does not work:

But suddenly in the midst of those proceedings the pain in his side, regardless of the stage the proceedings had reached, would begin in its gnawing work. Ivan Ilych would turn his attention to it and try to drive the thought of it away, but without success. *It* would come and stand before him and look at him, and he would be petrified and the light would die out of his eyes, and he would again begin asking himself whether *It* alone was true. ... He would shake himself, try to pull himself together, manage somehow to bring the sitting to a close, and return home with the sorrowful consciousness that his judicial labors could not as formerly hide from him what he wanted them to hide, and could not deliver him from *it* (DII 132-133).

It is Angst what makes Da-sein see the potentiality-of-its-own-being in anticipation. Heidegger clearly argues that Da-sein's understanding is always attuned, but

the attunement which is able to hold open the constant and absolute threat to itself arising from the ownmost individualized being of Da-sein is Angst. In Angst, Da-sein finds itself faced with the nothingness of the possible impossibility of its existence. Angst is anxious about the potentiality-of-being of the being thus determined, and thus discloses the most extreme possibility.... Being-toward-death is essentially Angst but not only Angst and certainly not Angst as a mere emotion (BT 266).

Da-sein, individualized by its anticipation of death becomes certain of the wholeness of its own potentiality-of-being. Angst, as an attunement of Da-sein, is the ground of self-understanding of Da-sein, and, therefore, belongs to Da-sein's authentic self-understanding (BT 266).

Having said that when Da-sein encounters the potentiality-of-its-being alone and separates itself from the they, it must be clearly expressed that this *does not* imply its withdrawal from daily life and its living the rest of its life like a hermit. Heidegger makes this point by saying that,

[i]f taking care of things and being concerned fails us, this does not, however, mean at all that these modes of Da-sein have been cut off from its authentic being a self. As essential structures of the constitution of Da-sein they also belong to the condition of the possibility of existence in general. Da-sein is authentically itself only if it projects itself, *as being-together with things taken care of and concerned being-with...*, primarily upon its ownmost potentiality-of-being, rather than upon the possibility of the they-self (BT 263).

That is, as far as Da-sein is, it is always being-with—being with other persons and beings. Even in its most extreme authentic mood, Da-sein projects itself as a being, which essentially is being-with, upon its potentiality-of-being. It focuses its attention primarily not on the they, but on its own being—without losing its connection with the they, with the things it takes care of and persons it shows concern. For leaving them completely behind and leading a monastic life is also a wrong way of understanding one's own being. Since Da-sein's being is primordially being-with, denying this characteristic of one's own being will prevent Da-sein from grasping its own being. (As Buddha said: "finding the middle way," living one's life without denying/exaggerating anything that belongs to one's being.)

Unlike inauthentic interpretation of death, anticipating its own death does not make Da-sein feel desperate and give up. On the contrary, it, as the non-relational and final possibility of its being, frees Da-sein from the bombardment of possibilities. It urges Da-sein to choose among those possibilities and take them upon itself. The anticipation or recognition of death always resides in the background of Da-sein's life, deeds, decisions, actions. In its inauthentic mode of being, Da-sein is lost in the gush of the possibilities and loses its focus against the temptation of these possibilities.

Authentic anticipation of death, however, urges it to choose among all these possibilities and therefore, choose its-own-self. In this way, Da-sein frees itself from being affected by all the possibilities of existence that make their appearance on its way and resolutely pursues the possibilities it has chosen. Authentic recognition of death, and the resolution that comes as a result of Da-sein's anticipating its own death may transform its life and all its other choices as well. As Heidegger puts it,

[b]ecause anticipation of the possibility not-to-be-bypassed also disclosed all the possibilities lying before it, this anticipation includes the possibility of taking the *whole* of Da-sein in advance in an existentiell way, that is, the possibility of existing as a *whole potentiality-of-being* (BT 264).

The certainty of death is different from all other kinds of certainty related to the events or the objects that we encounter in the world—for it belongs to Da-sein's being-in-the-world. As such, the truth of death "claims not only one definite kind of behavior of Da-sein, but claims Da-sein in the complete authenticity of its existence" (BT 265).

To sum, Heidegger recapitulates the characteristics of an authentic understanding of one's own being-toward-death as follows:

*Anticipation reveals to Da-sein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility to be itself, primarily unsupported by concern taking care of things, but to be itself in passionate anxious **freedom toward death** which is free of the illusions of the they, factual, and certain of itself* (BT 266).

But there are some critical questions that are left to ask: how is this possible? In what way does Da-sein feel the need to encounter and realize the authentic possibilities of its being? What urges Da-sein to do it? What motivates Da-sein to be a basically authentic self? There must be something that urges Da-sein to make this switch.

(4.5) Call of Conscience

Heidegger asserts that what leads Da-sein to make this leap to change its life and project its future on the authentic possibilities of its being (and therefore to be an

authentic self) is *the call of conscience*, which "has the character of summoning it to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self..." (BT 269).

In being they-self, Da-sein fails to hear itself; the noise of everyday chatter, and idle talk of the they outweighs one's own voice. What Da-sein hears when it listens to itself is not a verbal utterance that conveys a message or tells specific anything, but, as Heidegger puts it, is "giving-to-understand" (BT 271). The call calls the ones (in a silent way) who want to be brought back to themselves (BT 271). In this call inauthentic Da-sein (they-self) itself is summoned to its own self, i.e., to the authentic possibilities of its own being. Da-sein's self (to which it is summoned) is not something that already actually exists, but it is itself the very possibility of being an authentic self, i.e., "being what one can be in being free for one's ownmost possibilities (project)" (BT 199).

Yet, who calls Da-sein to itself? It does not come from outside and it is not a sound or voice anyone else can hear, but a silent call. In fact, the caller who summons Da-sein to itself is not an external being, but Da-sein itself—the thrown Da-sein that encounters the nothingness of the world. Da-sein in its encounter with nothingness and the null basis of its own being is individualized, it separates itself from the they. In this way it sees that their understanding and interpretation of the world is inadequate—which means that Da-sein has to make its decisions itself alone and take the responsibility of its choices. It is Da-sein's own self who calls it to undertake this task, encounter its authentic possibilities and project its future on these authentic possibilities.²¹

The call makes it known to Da-sein that it is *guilty*. Guilt is defined as a lack of Da-sein's responsibility toward itself due to not projecting itself on its authentic possibilities of being. In its inauthentic mode, Da-sein is lost in the they and immersed into the daily concerns. In its togetherness with the they, Da-sein forgets its own being, makes its decisions under the they's influence and does not appropriate the null basis of its own being. Hearing the call of conscience means not only that Da-sein recognizes the nullity of its own being, but also that it sees that it is guilty of not

²¹ It is Da-sein's own self who calls it for Da-sein's existence "means potentiality of being but also authentic potentiality of being" (BT 233).

making its own decisions in the light of its authentic possibilities. This means that even though Da-sein does not have complete power on its life, still, it can (and it should) make its own decisions within the limits of its own situation. Da-sein initially finds itself thrown into the world and in certain situations that it has not chosen. Yet, this does *not* mean that Da-sein is not responsible from its decisions. In fact, "...only because Da-sein is guilty in the ground of its being and closes itself off from itself as thrown and fallen prey, is conscience possible, if indeed the call basically gives us to understand *this being guilty*" (BT 286). Da-sein, projecting itself on the authentic possibilities of its being, does not and cannot overcome its guilt, for its guilt belongs to the null ground of its own being. Rather, it takes responsibility for its being, makes projections upon this basis, and in this way makes its necessarily guilty existence its own rather than they-self (HBT 128-129). The call of conscience is both a calling back and calling forth, it

calls back by calling forth: *forth* to the possibility of taking over in existence the thrown being that it is, *back* to thrownness in order to understand it as the null ground that it has to take up into existence. The calling back in which conscience calls forth gives Da-sein to understand that Da-sein itself—as the null ground of its null project, standing in the possibility of its being—must bring itself back to itself from its lostness in the they, and this means that it is *guilty* (BT 287).

If Da-sein hears and listens to this call, it chooses itself—becomes an authentic self and projects itself to the authentic possibilities of its being (BT 288). Yet, this call, as Heidegger makes clear, neither originates from nor urges Da-sein to choose a conscience which already exists—for conscience that calls is not objectively present prior to Da-sein's choice, nor is it a good/bad conscience as it is defined by the they. Rather, it is not readily given to Da-sein, in order to hear or understand the call of conscience first it must want to have a conscience. By choosing to have a conscience (that is, by making the null ground of its being its own and projecting itself to the authentic possibilities of its being) it has taken the responsibility of its own actions (BT 288). This responsibility amounts to Da-sein's readiness to make decisions in the light of its authentic possibilities of being. The response the call for conscience expects therefore is not adoption of a certain set of values or morality but a desire to

have a conscience (HBT 129). Da-sein who listens to the call of conscience sees that it is capable of changing its own life and self-understanding radically. To illustrate, Da-sein can realize that it may decide not to go to work anymore, suddenly break an unhappy marriage or move to a new place to realize its ideals that are possibilities of its being—just like the artist Paul Gauguin, as Henning Carlsen depicts in his movie *The Wolf at the Door* (1987), announces to his wife on a lovely day in front of their neighbors and friends that he cannot take it anymore and he does not want to spend the rest of his life in this place with these boring people who are unable to do anything with their lives but constantly gossiping and chatting about other people's lives and deeds. Or, as in the unforgettable scene in Luc Besson's film *Subway* (1985), the young working class woman, who married a rich but insensitive man, a mafia member, finally decides to leave her husband (and the luxurious life she has been living) when both of them were in a formal party at the Mayor's house. This is a serious decision, for even though once she wanted to live a comfortable life (like everyone else, as the they dictates), later she realizes that this is not the way she wishes to live the rest of her life—and gives up everything she has for a poor but "better" life in which she can "be" herself.

Why should Da-sein appropriate the null ground of its being if this ground does not originate from its own choice? I think that Da-sein's proper understanding of the null ground of its own being also amounts to Da-sein's awareness of the fact that it owes its existence to and does not exist prior to its null ground—but only from it and on the basis of it. It initially finds itself thrown into the world and in a certain (historical, natural, etc.) situation, but it constitutes itself by making decisions and choices *within* these situations (*as it becomes aware of them*)—regardless of whether or not it has control over them. In fact, Da-sein's nullity is inherent to its being and its capacity to project itself (for whenever it makes a choice, it gives up others). Therefore, nullity is essential to Da-sein's being. In this way, it sees that it is not the creator or the ground of its being, in other words, Da-sein understands that its existence is not its own from the beginning, but at the same its own as what it can be, as its possibilities. It owns its existence by resolutely making its own choices—for

resolution means owning, appropriating one's authentic potentiality of being. However, Da-sein also knows that in owning-its-own-self it does not have absolute control or authority over its being, but this amounts to owning the possibilities of one's being and understanding one's situation concretely. Its situation is disclosed to Da-sein in its resolute understanding of the situation. "Situation is the there disclosed in resoluteness—as which the existing being is there" (BT 299). Situation does not refer to the accidents and opportunities that Da-sein encounters in life, but it is the disclosure of "[t]he actual factual relevant character of the circumstances" (BT 300). Therefore, when call of conscience calls Da-sein to itself, it is not calling for some empty abstract ideal, rather, it calls Da-sein to the situation, to its potentiality-of-being. The concrete situation itself makes possible Da-sein's understanding of the particular *existentiell* possible ways of authentic existence. Resolute Da-sein also frees itself from the influence of the bombardment of possibilities and opportunities that it encounters daily life and enables it to "pull itself together from the dispersion and disconnectedness of what has just 'happened'" (BT 390). For this very reason, as Heidegger expresses,

for the they... situation is essentially closed off. The they knows only the "general situation," loses itself in the nearest "opportunities," and settles its Da-sein by calculating the "accidents" which it fails to recognize, deems its own achievement and passes off as such (BT 300).

Da-sein's desire to have a conscience and projecting itself to its authentic possibilities can be seen as a mode of understanding. In this sort of self-disclosure Da-sein's conscience urges it to resolutely project itself on its authentic potentiality of being. Resolute Da-sein does not isolate itself from the world and other people. Rather, resoluteness "returns Da-sein to its particular place in its world, to its specific concernful relations with entities and solicitous relations with others, in order to discover what its possibilities in that situation really are and to seize upon them in whatever way is most genuinely its own" (HBT 129).

Heidegger describes Da-sein's lostness in the they and in the events of everyday life as its flight from its own death—for Da-sein's being-toward-death is authentically revealed only in its anticipating its own death and its resolution. In

resolution Da-sein incorporates its birth (i.e. thrownness) and death into its life, i.e., it appropriates its past, its thrownness, retrieves the possibilities of being that it inherited from the past (in Heidegger's terms, the possibilities that "have-been," which are rooted in its past and can be retrieved, furthered in the future) and projects them to its future (BT 391). While doing this authentic Da-sein, as Heidegger asserts, is not immersed into the present moment. Rather, it understands that its being is being-toward-death, its time is finite, and its present arises from its past (as having-been) and its future. This means that authentic Da-sein is always concerned about future when it makes its decisions and projects. It always understands itself as a futural being, which is more than what it is now and whose existence means its potentiality of being. It does not understand its future as a time which is far from its present, but as "future that makes present, in the process of having-been." (BT 350). In other words, for authentic Da-sein future is not something or some time that is "not now but will be later," but future plays an important role when it makes its decisions. It projects, plans its future and these plans together with the possibilities that it inherited from the past determine and shape the way it lives its present. In this sense, Da-sein's future and "what-it-will-be" in the future is not apart from its present and past, but its present is always a having-been. In this sense, death, for authentic Da-sein is not just an event that happens in future, rather, it is the constant possibility of impossibility of its being and it is a having-been—something that constantly happens. For this very reason, Da-sein's existence is not free from death, its being is being-toward-death.

In the next chapter I will explicate Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial* to further clarify and exemplify some Heideggerian concepts and themes.

Chapter 5: Kafka and Heidegger: A Philosophical Kinship

(5.1) *The Trial*

In his novel *The Trial* Franz Kafka tells the story of a young bank officer called Joseph K.—beginning from his getting arrested in the morning of his thirtieth birthday until his suicide. It is the story of a common man who once (albeit only slightly) doubted about his way of life, values and worldview. Joseph K. lives a simple and orderly life—he has a job, every evening he takes a short walk after the work alone or with his colleagues, goes to a bar, and meets with his mistress once a week. Kafka does not give him a “real” surname, instead, a single initial stands for his family name which insinuates that Joseph K. is any man and every man. This also hints that Joseph K. is rootless—his story symbolizes the universal humans condition, thrownness into the middle of an alien world in which it is essentially not at home.²² Not only there can be found a possible interpretation of the complex symbolic structure of *The Trial* in Heidegger’s ontological analysis of Da-sein, but also *The Trial* might illuminate the meaning of Heidegger’s concepts of “guilt” “call of conscience” etc., and in this way, these two separate text may shed light on each other.

In the beginning of the novel in the morning of his thirtieth birthday (at a time when one is expected to reflect on and justify the life that one has been leading, for “after a certain age, every person is responsible from the way his face looks”), Joseph K., who is very successful in life and holds a high position at the Bank, is informed by two warders of the court that he is arrested. It is not accidental that K. is arrested early in the morning, in his bed, while he was waiting for his landlady’s cook to bring him his breakfast—for such important questions, the questions concerning the meaning of one’s life and being cannot be encountered in daily routine. He was arrested in the least expected time and got caught off-guard: in his night gown, still lying down in his bed, hungry and expecting to have his breakfast as usual. K. also knows that

²² One should be careful not to interpret Joseph K.’s story representing the fall of humanity, rather, it is about a possible condition each and every human being may find herself. The fall of K. is not the fall of humanity but of particular class of people who reacts to this universal human condition in the same way as K. does.

something like this would not happen when he was at work, when he does not think about himself but is immersed in the daily concerns and duties. Even if this happened in the Bank, K., who is very successful in business matters, would be happy to deal with it (26). But this is not a business matter, the issue is about *his own* very being which caught him unprepared in the morning when he is not expected to be busy with his work. Yet, K., failing to see the real meaning of this unexpected event, does not know how to comprehend such issues. He tries to handle it as if it was a business deal. Despite his awareness of the fact that this event was not a joke, K. still does not take it seriously. He tells the Inspector, who was sent by the Court for his first interrogation following the arrest, that, "I am very much surprised, of course, but when one has lived for thirty years in this world and had to fight one's way through it, as I have had to do, one becomes hardened to surprises and doesn't take them too seriously" (16). This shows that K. thinks that his arrest is not different from any event that may happen to him—no matter how serious, personal and unusual it might be. He is so submerged into his daily routine, orderly life and work that nothing surprises him. He is so used to interpret his life in an average way that he is unable to see the things in a different light, from a different perspective, see them as they are. Moreover, he cannot even distinguish the question about his own very being from daily problems and regards it as if it was a problem that he encounters in business.

It must be noted that albeit K.'s lack of understanding of his situation, in fact, he is more sensitive than most people, for *not everybody gets arrested*. It is only some people, who felt some meaninglessness, who are sensitive enough (even slightly) to feel the nothingness of their life (the null ground of their being) and being, are arrested ("Most of the accused men are so sensitive" [81]). The court does not chase the guilty people, nor can it be described as a political authority—it is one's own self who arrests the guilty, proceeds these inner investigations, and suspends him until he agrees to face it. As the Inspector, upon Joseph K.'s complaint, explains "Our officials, so far as I know them, never go hunting for crime in the populace, but, as the Law decrees, are drawn toward the guilty and must then send out us warders..." (10). Their guilt (i.e. nothingness of their being) itself draws the court, or the self into all these

investigations and self-examination. But K. never asks what the Law is, he only asks what authority arrested him, what he did wrong, and always claims that he is innocent. As one of the warders points out, "he admits that he doesn't know the Law and yet claims he's innocent" (10).

All these investigations and arrest do not come from outside, but from inside. As Heidegger asserts, it is the call of their conscience which haunts Da-sein, calls it to find its own "real" self and face the incompleteness of its being—regardless of how successful and respected a person it is in public life. This is a personal and most intimate question for Da-sein, the question it should encounter and answer alone. This is a test that one gives to oneself—if one passes the test, that is, manages to deal with this question alone, one will be "oneself," will be an authentic self. If not, the person tries to suppress and forget this question but will be haunted by it from time to time which makes her more anxious and distracted. It is a choice, but *not* any choice; it is the most important, most critical choice one ever makes in one's life: the choice of being or not being one's self. This is the question, which can by no means be answered by anyone but Da-sein itself. For this very reason, nobody ever tells K. directly what he is guilty of. In this way, Joseph K. encounters absurdity directly for the first time in his life—for this arrest itself and the subsequent events simply show the absurdity of the world that people tend to overlook in our daily life and average interpretation. He is arrested, because he always escapes from questioning his life and thinking about his being. In fact he, in his heart of hearts, knows that he has been punished for *this* very reason—refusing to ponder on his own being. Yet, he does not directly encounter this truth. Upon K.'s questions regarding his arrestment, The Inspector warns him about his attitude toward his situation by saying that, "if I cannot answer your questions, I can at least give you a piece of advice; think less about us and of what is going to happen to you, think more about yourself instead" (17). This is the best piece of advice that can be given to a person in K.'s situation. With this advice, the Inspector invites K. to listen to the voice of his conscience and accept his guilt.

Not only the Inspector, but also the two warders on the first day of K.'s arrest hint that there is a problem with the way he perceives his arrest: "If you would only realize your position, and if you wouldn't insist on uselessly annoying us two, who probably mean better by you and stand closer to you than any other people in the world" (9). It is true that the court is closer to K. than anyone else—for it is not an external body but K.'s own self who questions and invites himself to encounter his own being. Nevertheless, he still avoids facing this decisive question. He tries to lead his life as if nothing had happened and seeks help from his relatives, women, from advocates—from almost everyone he meets.

In fact, after the arrestment, nothing is wrong with leading one's life as it has always been—the Inspector on the day of his arrestment tells K. that, "You are under arrest, certainly, but that need not hinder you from going about your business. Nor will it prevent from leading your ordinary life" (20). Since the arrest (or pondering on the question of the meaning of one's being) is not a physical act that comes from outside, it does not prevent one from being involved in daily life and activities. It does not lead *Da-sein* into a hermitic solitude—it only calls *Da-sein* to interpret world (or being) in an authentic fashion, that is, put its mark on its own life by choosing among its authentic possibilities of being and by resolutely pursuing them.

The arrestment is a call for meditation on one's self; Kafka implies this very often in various sections of the novel. Having informed K. that he was arrested, the warders and the Investigator inform him that now they are leaving him alone. The inspector, thinking that the news have slightly shocked K., had brought three clerks from the Bank to accompany him. Surprisingly enough, despite the fact that these three gentlemen were present during the first interrogation, K. did not notice them! Actually, during this period, he had not noticed anything else but was focused on his situation. Since he was immersed into the activity of self-examination with this first serious warning to come to himself, he forgot about the world and other people and was concerned only with himself and his own case. While doing so, everything loses its meaning and the importance given to public life simply fades away. That is the

reason why K. does not even see these three persons, outsiders, who have nothing to do with K.'s investigation.

Moreover, K. "remembered that he had not noticed the Inspector and the warders leaving, the Inspector had usurped his attention so that he did not recognize the three clerks, and the clerks in turn made him oblivious of the Inspector" which implies that when Da-sein is focused on one sphere (public or personal) it simply forgets about the other (22). For this very reason in order to be an authentic self, to think about itself, Da-sein should separate itself from the they, and should think about itself.

Despite all the signs that K. receives from the people related to the court he makes false judgments about the Court. He tries to understand the logic of these interrogations as if they were belonging to the daily life. That is, K. fails to distinguish between the personal and public spheres of his life. When he goes to the first hearing, he was surprised to find out that the Court is located in the poorest parts of the city where K. has never gone before. He also notices that the Examining Magistrate's office is in the attic of a tenement in that part of the city. He finds it strange, for he expects to see a large building and luxurious offices. He realizes that he is much better off than the Examining Magistrate—he has a large office, a waiting room attached to it and he can see the busy life of the city through his large windows. By this token, he feels himself superior to the Law Court—for he is wealthier, he is in a good position in the Bank. He never thinks that all these things are meant to remind him that he has never reflected on life, never thought about the world (poverty, injustice, etc.) but was focused only on his own business and has never questioned the average interpretation that was given to him by the society (or the they). Not surprisingly, the first time K. enters the Law Court, he notices that all the accused men waiting in the lobby belong to the upper classes. But when it comes to have an authentic understanding of the world, these people have nothing to say. K. approaches one of them and tries to talk with him.

And he turned to the nearest, a tall, slender, gray-haired man. "What are you waiting here for?" asked K. courteously. But this unexpected question confused the man, which was the more deeply embarrassing as he was obviously a man of the world who

would have known how to comport himself anywhere else and would not lightly have renounced his natural superiority. Yet in this place he did not know even how to reply to a simple question and gazed at the others as if it were their duty to help him, as if no one could expect him to answer should help not be forthcoming (79).

The Law Court is attracted especially to the well off, for they, always being in a superior position, usually do not feel the need to question the meaning of their being. K. cannot stay in the Law Courts for a long time, which symbolizes his getting closer to the heart of his case, i.e., to his guilt. As he proceeds further in the corridors, sees the offices, he feels dizzy and wants to get out.

The Court is serious about the arrest, and it tries to remind K. (by dragging him into the ghettos) that he should question his own interpretation of the world and values and see that everything to which he attributed great value is in fact *nothing*—because most of the time people reconsider their values and attitudes when they encounter something which is simply absurd or disturbing that cannot fit into their understanding of life. It is not accidental that the tradesman Block, another accused man whom K. meets, was arrested right after his wife's death—at a time one gets anxious and encounters the nothingness of the world with the sudden loss of a loved one. At such moments, with the shock of the event, people may think that something is wrong with the way they make sense of the world which may cause a change in their understanding of life. Yet K., like Block whose case has been continuing for five and a half years, does not get the message and misinterprets everything he saw in the Law Court. Having seen nothingness once, the accused persons cannot forget it, but most of them (like Block) do not listen to the voice of their conscience but try to suppress it.

Joseph K. thinking that since his case is in an early stage, and the court might deliver him without any charges and close his case once and for all, goes to see a lawyer with whom his uncle is acquainted. Despite warnings from the people who belong to the Court, K. misunderstands the nature and significance of his case. K. is so inclined to forget about the seriousness of his arrestment, for he prefers spending his time with the lawyer's nurse instead of making the most of his visit by discussing his case with the lawyer and the Chief Clerk of the Court who happened to be there.

And, whenever he thinks about it, he believes that it is in no way different from a business deal and supposes that

there was no need for exaggerated anxiety at the moment. In a relatively short time he had managed to work himself up to his present high position in the Bank and to maintain himself in that position and win recognition from everybody; surely if the abilities which had made this possible were to be applied to the unraveling of his own case, there was no doubt that it would go well. Above all, if he were to achieve anything, it was essential that he should banish from his mind once and for all the idea of possible guilt. There was no such guilt. This legal action was nothing more than a business deal such as he had often concluded to the advantage of the Bank, a deal within which, as always happened, lurked various dangers which must simply be obviated. The right tactics were to avoid letting one's thoughts stray to one's own possible shortcomings, and to cling as firmly as one could to the thought of one's advantage (158-59).

However, this is not the "right" way of encountering his guilt: everyone should encounter the Law alone; any lawyers, councils, written formal defenses are not meant well for the case. For "[authorities] wanted to eliminate defending councils as much as possible; the whole onus of the Defense must be laid on the accused himself" (145). This is an important point, because no one can face one's own guilt with help from outside. On the contrary, any external interference may ruin the whole case, because everyone should reflect on the meaning of one's own existence alone. Since the answer lies in the person, the person's understanding of her own authentic possibilities, involvement of an external element would not be helpful in answering such an intimate question.

The Law Court transmits its message not directly, for there is nothing to tell, nothing to express in words, except some paradoxes and absurdities. In this way, it invites the accused to think about the nothingness fundamental to the world. People in daily life are so accustomed to and immersed into the language and logic they have been using, they forget about this non-linguistic and non-logical basis of the world. They assume that what they know is in fact everything about the world. What they said is accepted without any questioning. Paradoxes that are in contradiction with commonsense is the way the Court conveys the message that one should encounter absurdity, nothingness inherent to the world, and, in this way, see the inefficiency of average interpretation and then try to re-interpret being—because this is the only way

to exist meaningfully in such a world. In fact, this is, as Günther Anders notes, a method Kafka uses in most of his writings:

The face of Kafka's world appears distorted to the point of madness. Yet with him the madness lies not in distortion, but in the world itself; the distortion is needed in order to make visible the madness which so often appears and passes for normal. By continuing to treat this madly distorted world as normal, Kafka conveys this sense of the even madder fact that madness itself is not recognized (*FrK* 9).

In *The Trial*, the absurd proceedings of the Court in fact invite K. to face the absurdity and nothingness of the world itself. For example, when Joseph K. goes to visit the artist Titorelli, the Court's painter, in his attic, K. notices a portrait on which he has been working. But K. does not understand whose portrait it is.

"It is justice," said the painter at last. "Now I can recognize it," said K. "There's the bandage over the eyes, and there are the scales. But aren't there wings on the figure's heels, and isn't it flying?" "Yes," said the painter, "my instructions were to paint it like that; actually it is Justice and the goddess of Victory in one" (*T* 182).

As K. notices, this is not a good combination. Our commonsense tells us that justice and victory has nothing to do with each other, winners and losers, the rich and the poor are all equal before justice. However, here, the Law Court challenges even the most commonsensical truths and invites the guilty to question the truth and meaning of such values as they are being defined in the world. In the Law Court, this very basic commonsensical distinction loses its meaning.

This paradox also clearly exemplifies the way the Law Court works. Its proceedings are incomprehensible, sheer nonsense if one tries to impose any logical framework on it. Any attempt to get it by means of a logical scheme injures one's case severely. So, it seems that the best attitude is to confess one's guilt as early as possible. For, any action, any defense will fall within the borders of language and logic, and fall short of understanding it properly. Knowledge or understanding of the world in and through a language is intertwined with a logic and rationality. Therefore, a proper disclosure of nothingness requires its own way of encountering seeing. The Law Court invites K. to such an understanding. This is not just any invitation, but the most significant one, for it invites K. to free himself from the they, face his own being,

the possibilities of his life and be himself. Nevertheless, he is not brave enough to give ear to the call, and reflect on his life and being. He always asks others' (the they's) advice and refuses to think of himself on his own. But his guilt never leaves him alone and forces him to face it.

Titorelli also gives K. useful information about the Law Court. When K. asks him about the chances of the acquittal of his case, he, who knows a lot about the Law Court and the particular cases, replies that he has never heard of any case of definite acquittal. That is to say, in all the cases he has known since his childhood, there was none in which the accused person was found innocent. There are two possibilities other than the sentence: Either the guilty person will be arrested again and the interrogations will be repeated from time to time, or his case continues slowly and he regularly meets with the judges—once a year, twice a year, even once every other week, or more often, one cannot know beforehand. Nevertheless, once a case is open, it is almost impossible to close it.

Titorelli is right, for once a person faced nothingness, the groundlessness of one's being, it is impossible to free oneself completely from the realization of this truth. In this sense, expecting a definite acquittal of a case is vain. The guilt will remind itself to the accused person at times—for the guilt belongs to the person and is fundamental to his being.

The last and the clearest warning from the Court is given to K. in a Cathedral. K., having discovered that his lawyer is not doing anything good for his case, finally decides to dismiss him. This is a good move, and it seems that the Court has appreciated his decision and wanted to give him a clear and distinct warning to help him to improve his case. One dark, rainy morning K. went to the Cathedral not for religious or personal reasons, but to take an Italian colleague there as a matter of business. This time the call was so clear, so articulate that K. could not pretend he did not understand it: "it was no congregation the priest was addressing, the words were unambiguous and inescapable, he was calling: 'Joseph K.!' " (262). The prison chaplain for the first time during K.'s trial directly tells him that his case is going badly and he should avoid searching for outside help. In order to make him

understand and assess his case better, he tells K. about the writings describing a particular delusion that prefaces the Law:

before the Law stands a doorkeeper. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country who begs for admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he cannot admit the man at the moment. The man, on reflection, asks if he will be allowed, then, to enter. "It is possible," answers the doorkeeper, "but not at this moment." Since the door leading into the Law stands open as usual and the doorkeeper steps to one side, the man bends down to peer through the entrance. When the doorkeeper sees that, he laughs and says: "If you are so strongly tempted, try to get in without my permission. But note that I am powerful. From hall to hall, keepers stand at every door, one more powerful than the other. And the sight of the third man is already more than even I can stand." These are the difficulties which the man from the country has not expected to meet, the Law, he thinks, should be accessible to every man and at all times, but when he looks more closely at the doorkeeper in his furred robe, with his huge pointed nose and long thin Tartar beard, he decides that he had better wait until he gets permission to enter.... There he sits waiting for days and years. He makes many attempts to be allowed in and wearies the doorkeeper with his importunity.... The man... parts with all he has, however valuable, in the hope of bribing the doorkeeper. The doorkeeper accepts it all, saying, however, as he takes each gift: "I take this only to keep you from feeling that you have left something undone." During all these long years the man watches the doorkeeper incessantly. He forgets about the other doorkeepers, and this one seems to him the only barrier between himself and the Law.... Finally his eyes grow dim and he does not know whether his eyes are only deceiving him.... Now his life is drawing to a close.... He beckons the doorkeeper,... "Everyone strives to attain the Law, ...how does it come about, then that in all these years no one has come seeking admittance but me?" The doorkeeper perceives the man is nearing his end and his hearing is failing, so he bellows in his ear: "No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since the door was intended for you. I am now going to shut it" (267-69).

This is the most important moment during K.'s case in which the essence of the Law is openly and forcefully expressed. The door for an individual to be herself is always open, and open only to her during all her lifetime. As long as she is, she can take this way to be herself—she can consider her possibilities, face her own being, decide what to do in the rest of her life and make her decision. However, to follow this way is not that easy. One cannot capriciously enter this door without any hindrance. On the contrary, she will face lots of barriers that seemingly prevent her access to the Law, that is, to her true self. Nevertheless, as it is indicated in priest's parable, these hindrances do belong to the Law itself. The way to be oneself can be opened only when one encounters these difficulties and bravely overcomes them—regardless of how hard they are. And maybe the barriers will get harder and harder as

one proceeds, for it is certainly a painstaking effort that requires a sheer devotion that should be kept and cherished despite and through all the obstacles. Yet, it sounds like a superstition to say in the beginning that it is a very difficult journey and let oneself be discouraged with the idea that even if one enters this door, the others will be harder. Instead, one should enter the door and be determined to overcome all the barriers—for one can be oneself only in such a process, in and through one's encounter and dealing with the difficulties that one has to surmount. Therefore, there is actually no particular objective "something" waiting for one behind the doors. It is the person who is going to create herself, her own objectives in life as she gets engaged with the self-creation process by having her own plans, reflecting on and changing her attitudes as she lives. If one waits for the doors to open as she kindly asks for permission to enter, she is misunderstanding her case. Or, if one tries to find a roundabout way to enter, again, she is deceiving oneself—for the only way to enter is to fight her way through the Law. Nonetheless, in order to do this, to have an authentic project and be determined to pursue it, one should, first, recognize the null basis of her being. This means that one should see that she is thrown into the world which she did not choose but instead of forgetting this and losing herself in the they, she should appropriate the nullity of her being and project herself on her authentic possibilities of being, and constitute herself out of the thrownness and scatteredness of her being.

Second, to do this, one should separate herself from the they, should encounter her possibilities on herself without expecting help from other people. As the priest tells K., one can get through one's case only if one minimizes outside help. One should learn to understand and assess her situation alone (without other people's interference and influence) and choose her own way freely. There is no content of one's existence that is dictated by the Law, for the Law can only indicate how to realize herself, how to have an access to the Law, without predetermining what it means to get the Law. So, one realizes the Law herself, no one can tell her what move she should do next, for there is *nothing* to tell.

Third, one should face the finitude of her being—otherwise, she assumes that she has infinite time and, as the man from the country does, spends all her time

waiting in front of the door of the Law, without finding the courage to enter. It is this disclosure of one's mortality as described by Heidegger as being-toward-death that urges her to take action and face the Law as early as possible. For one knows that she is running out of time, she has limited amount of time to realize herself. So, the person makes her decisions seriously and follows them with great resolution—knowing that it is a process, an everlasting effort that cannot be a leisure activity but a long way to walk which will take her whole lifetime. After all, being one's own self is not dependent on performing this or that action but is concerning the way she interprets world (or being) and her very possibilities, and the actions she takes in accordance with this interpretation. As the man from the country realizes in the moment of death, this particular door to the Law has been open *only* for himself, and after his death it will be closed forever. That is, no one can enter from another person's door, or claim to realize another person's possibilities, it is meant only for particular persons themselves. Even though the Law is the Law, it is universal, the way to reach it is always personal, or individual. The man from the country did not understand the mortality of his own being authentically—for he spent all his life waiting in front of the door, expecting the doorkeeper to let him in. But he never realized the truth (understanding of which would urge him to take action) that he is a finite being and death is his ownmost possibility. Instead, he waited there until the last moment of his life without realizing that he *cannot* wait there forever.

However, again, K. fails to get the meaning not only of the parable told by the priest, but also of the Law in accordance with which he was arrested and cannot find the courage to accept his guilt and think of his being. Besides, everything in his daily life is also getting worse; since he has been distracted by the thought of his case, he is not successful at work as he was and his prestige in the Bank was injured.

Finally, he commits suicide on the evening before his thirty-first birthday. As Wilhelm Emrich clearly puts it, "Joseph K. has gained the knowledge that it is his 'duty' to execute justice upon himself. That is the utmost that can be achieved on earth" (FK 364). K. gained this knowledge, but his inability to act, to execute justice upon himself became his end. The depiction of K.'s suicide is also rather interesting

in the novel. That evening two men dressed in frock coats, who look like "tenth-rate old actors" came to K.'s place to take him. He was already waiting for them to come, so the three people went out of the town (Kafka a number of times states that they look and move like one; they formed "a unity such as can hardly be formed except by lifeless matter [281]). In a small stone quarry, they laid K. down on the ground and after a hesitation about who to do the deed, one of them thrusts a double-edged butcher's knife deep into his heart. All these happen voluntarily for the men are, as Kafka emphasizes, not separate from K. The last words K. uttered were "Like a dog!" as if he pities the indignity of his death.

If anxious Da-sein is going to be an authentic self, it has to face its own being, the possibilities of its own being and project itself on its authentic possibilities. As clearly explicated in the Priest's parable encountering the mortality of its being plays a crucial role. In the parable, the man from the country did not authentically understand that his being is being-toward-death, and he just spent all his life in front of the door—without knowing that his being and also his finitude are the actual limits of his self-realization. K., like the man from the country waited for help from outside and expected the acquittal of his case but he never tried to encounter his own self. Instead, he tried to make sense of his own case as if it was a daily event and failed to understand the meaning of his arrest. I think that the most important difference between the man from the country and K. is that K. could not stand living under arrest and committed suicide. The man from the country, on the other hand, waited in front of the door until the moment of his death. Both of them failed to understand authentically their being-toward-death, and to project themselves on the authentic possibilities of their being. Refusal to or inability to encounter their being and finitude resulted in a failure to get the Law—or to "become what they are." I think that at this point, the significance Heidegger attributes to Da-sein's being-toward-death and resolution gets clearer—for without a proper, authentic understanding and anticipation of one's own death, recognizing the possibilities of one's being and resolution Angst is not likely to have a transformative power.

However, it must be noted that K.'s story is more complicated than the story of the man from the country. He encountered the absurdity, the nothingness of the world, and tried hard to avoid the anxiety evoked by it; yet he failed to think of himself, his own being, and most importantly the mortality of his existence, and could not make a decision between returning to *they-self* or projecting on his own authentic possibilities. Knowing that he cannot be the same person after his arrestment, this inconclusiveness led him to choose to end his life as a way of ultimate flight from Angst and potentiality of his being.

This might be the proper place that we can consider the Stoic critique of Heidegger's understanding of death, which is, as Fackenheim suggests, about his denial of a Pagan-Stoic suicide in his philosophy (*EBJ* 214). In *BT* Heidegger does not discuss the possibility of suicide, nor mentions it except for once in passing on page 229. Even though he does not consider the issue of suicide, still, we can say that it is *one* of the possibilities of *Da-sein* but the impossibility of being. I think that *Da-sein*, when it thinks that the material conditions of life do not allow one to live a virtuous life, or for some reason one cannot live according to nature of man in general, or for some reason finds the pursuit of life completely worthless, may decide to commit suicide. In fact, Joseph K.'s suicide can be seen as an example of this kind of choice. K., knowing that he does not have courage to accept his guilt, to project himself on the authentic possibilities of his being, and to re-interpret being in an authentic way takes death over life. It can be said that in its encounter with the nullity of its being, *Da-sein* may fail to make sense of its being and fall into nihilism. For example, Joseph K., when the call of conscience calls him to himself understood that the average daily understanding of being does not help. Yet, he could not face the authentic possibilities of his own being, and could not project himself to these possibilities. He, at the same time could not return to everyday life and could not live as if he did not encounter the nothingness of being. As a result, he could not make sense of his existence and unable to live in this way, committed suicide. Suicide is always a possibility that *Da-sein* can choose—but probably in most cases not the best choice. I think that Heidegger's reluctance to mention suicide as a possibility of *Da-*

sein is because he thinks that a completely meaningless life is impossible. Da-sein is the being who essentially understands, interprets and makes sense of being. He believes that human existence is an end in itself, in each and every case it is possible to make sense of life in this or that way, and most of the time there is at least one other possibility of Da-sein which is better than suicide—instead of ending its existence, it should face with difficulties and limits and try to live through them. Of course, sometimes this may not be the case and Da-sein may find itself in such a situation that all possibilities of its being seem less than acceptable or desirable. I think that in such situations Da-sein has the right to terminate its being-in-the-world.

(5.2) Nothingness of Being

The Trial, like Heidegger's phenomenology, depicts a deviation from (but not a rejection of) logical/scientific understanding. When he is first arrested, Joseph K. tries to deal with this problem in a logical and commonsensical way. He shows his papers to the warders and in turn asks them to show theirs. Yet this commonsensical reaction does not work, and this is exactly what Kafka wants to show in the novel. This event of Joseph K.'s arrestment and the way the Law Court works cannot be comprehended by any systematic logical reasoning. A different kind of understanding is needed—that may not be expressed logically and by linguistic tools.

Heidegger's "being" also is not something that can be understood, defined and expressed in language. In fact, understanding being requires us to see what cannot be expressed in logical terms but is of the greatest importance. It is the context of meaning, or being, which is the ground of meaning which goes beyond language and logic. Ludwig Wittgenstein explicates this point by saying that,

To be sure, I can imagine what Heidegger means by being and anxiety. Man feels the urge to run up against the limits of language. Think for example of the astonishment that anything at all exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is also no answer whatsoever. Anything we might say is a priori bound to be mere nonsense. Nevertheless we do run up against the limits of language (LWVC 68).

As Wittgenstein puts it, the source of anxiety is not something we can point at—for there is *nothing* to show. What anxiety is about, that is, nothingness, is more basic than everything we can conceive and express in language and logic. Despite our attempt to frame and understand it in terms of logic and language, it eludes us. It speaks a silent language which can be heard only by the ones who give an ear. Joseph K., because of his logical and commonsensical attitude, was from the beginning doomed to fail—for in order to face his problem, he had to recognize the limits of language and logic.

CHAPTER 6: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Having explicated Heidegger's existential ontological thesis and the significance it accords to death, we can now return to the philosophical discussions on death and selfhood that we introduced in the first chapter.

(6.1) The Issue of Death

In light of our explication of the significance of death in Heidegger's existential ontology, now we are in a better position to distinguish his standpoint from other philosophical approaches to death (namely, indifference to death, religious attitude and conceiving it merely as an event) that we mentioned in the first chapter.

The *first* attitude toward death is indifference in the face of it. According to this position, since I am not going to experience my own death, that is, I will not "be" anymore when I am dead, there is nothing to fear about one's own death. Epicurus' famous rubric "Death is nothing" is used by some people to support this position. As Robert Solomon correctly remarks, saying that death is nothing may come to mean that life is also nothing, which may result in leading a totally irresponsible life—for example, in the form of a hedonistic, purely pleasure-oriented life or in a state of not seeking anything, neither pleasure nor joy, but merely passing time. From Heidegger's point of view, some people may believe that death/life is not important at all, but this could be interpreted as failure to make sense of life and the world. Of course, one may think that life is meaningless and empty, but it seems to me that this is so mainly because one has been unable to project oneself on one's possibilities and, consequently, found the pursuit of life pointless—or expected to find an absolute truth or meaning in life and failed. In Heideggerian terms, humans are beings that understand and interpret the being, and project themselves to their possibilities. When they fail to find a meaning in life and in their being, they are in a deficient or minimal

mode of making sense of being—minimal, because the essential character of Da-sein is understanding, interpreting, that is, making sense of beings and events.²³

The *second* position toward death is the religious approach which has been criticized by thinkers like Epicurus. According to this view, human existence will somehow persist after my death. How this happens and in what form the person's existence continues may be viewed differently by different religious thinkers and interpreters. The way Heidegger raises the question of death and human existence differs remarkably from these religious discussions. In religious discussions, the problem is mostly of infinitude whereas Heidegger poses the question of death as a problem of finitude of the worldly human existence. In his ontology human existence is conceived as being-in-the-world and as there-to, i.e., solely this-worldly. It does not come with any claims about what lies beyond of this world and this is not just accidentally. It seems that such an attitude is a requirement of the method of analysis he adopted, viz., phenomenology. Phenomenology, as Heidegger defines in the first pages of *BT*, is a method that requires a confrontation with things themselves as they reveal themselves to us. Everything that is to be discussed about the objects that phenomenology captures must be "directly indicated and directly demonstrated" (*BT* 35). Moreover, the point of his discussion of death, guilt, conscience is to complete the existential ontological analysis of Da-sein, which is preliminary to understanding the question of being. In these respects, with his decidedly this-worldly understanding of human existence and being, Heidegger's philosophy differs from religious thinking. Hence, his conception of death and selfhood also differs from traditional theological conceptions. Heidegger would say that even if there is an after-life as theological views claim, still, this does not change the truth that worldly human existence is being-in-the-world and being-toward-death. Humans are the beings that understand,

²³ Robert Solomon remarks that when Epicurus wrote that "death is nothing" (which later used as a slogan by the ones who deny death) he was against those who overstated the worry about the event of death, firmly believed in afterlife and the punishment of gods in his time (*DF* 166). Understood in its context, his remark was not a manifestation of the denial of or indifference to death, but was to argue that there is no afterlife in which gods will punish us and therefore this excessive worry about death and afterlife is unfounded. Indeed Epicurus was essentially saying that there is only life for us and, in death our existence will definitely come to an end.

interpret and are self-constituting—and death is a boundary situation, the ultimate limit to its finite existence in the world as a self. Regardless of whether there is life after death or not, human existence is being-toward-death and humans are constantly dying as soon as they are born.

The *third* approach holds that death is an event that happens in the end of one's life and is external to one's being; that is, when we are alive, death is away from us, and in death our existence comes to an end—which means that it cannot be a present possibility of one's being. One of the proponents of this view is Jean Paul Sartre who agrees with Heidegger that death is an *a priori* limit, but, he adds, it is *one of the limits* of human existence. So, Sartre denies the Heideggerian account that we are already dying as soon as we are born and that death is a constant possibility of our being. Instead, he would say, we are alive now and death is an *a priori* necessity of the human condition which is going to happen one day—it is one of the *a priori* structures of the human condition, but it is *not* the constant possibility of human beings. As opposed to Heidegger's view, he thinks that death does not disclose any meaning, it is simply there, and it is absurd because it is the absolute termination of human existence.

From Heidegger's point of view this is a not a complete and authentic understanding of death. Seeing death not as my own, not as an essential part of my existence but as an event that will happen one day (but not now) is a manifestation of the failure to understand the meaning of the phenomenon of death. If death is, as Heidegger argues, a possibility that enters into my interpretative horizon, it cannot be reduced to a mere event. Rather, it is the ultimate limit of my being, understanding of which may change the way I interpret, make sense of the world and my existence.

Heidegger argues that Da-sein is a temporal being; it is not only in time, but itself is a temporal and historical being that exists only in and through time. Since Da-sein is its own possibilities, none of the possibilities of its being could be situated outside the time, or outside its existence—including death. However, Sartre denies that death is a possibility that we expect to realize. He argues that we can wait for or expect only a determined event. Death, being the undetermined limit of my existence,

cannot be awaited. This is certainly a misinterpretation of Heidegger's point for, as we have already mentioned, death is a different kind of possibility which is not expected or waited by Da-sein. But, the crux of the problem lies in the way Heidegger and Sartre regard self-constitution. Both Heidegger and Sartre agree that the rationalist thesis that self has a determined nature is wrong. Self is self-constituting and the essence of human being is not prior to its existence. So, human being and human acting are in principle not distinct from each other. Sartre argues that human being is what it does, that is, making choices, acting, deciding, seeking to realize mundane plans and projects. At this point Heidegger agrees that Da-sein is what it does but, for him, what it fundamentally does is *to interpret*. The basis of all action and choosing is the act of interpretation through which things are disclosed and the plans and projects are carried out. Therefore, contrary to the contention of Sartre and other existentialists, acting is not the most primary thing; what is more essential than action is interpretation. If this is true, then death, as Heidegger argues, is not just an event that is going to happen sometime in the future, and it is not just one limit among the others—it is the *ultimate limit*, awareness of which discloses all possibilities of Da-sein's being and also urges it to project itself on the authentic possibilities of being. Da-sein's understanding of this ultimate limit is not a mere awareness of mortality of one's existence ("One day I will die"), but more importantly, an authentic understanding of this phenomenon as it enters into Da-sein's self-understanding and changes the way Da-sein interprets being. Awareness of limits of one's being transforms the way Da-sein makes sense of the world and projects its future. An authentic understanding of death discloses all possibilities of Da-sein's being and understanding the world. One may begin to see life differently when one understands that sorrow, guilt, etc. are inescapable to human existence, but realization of one's finitude makes a bigger impact which radically changes one's self-understanding. For an authentic understanding of death, as the ultimate possibility, ultimate limit of Da-sein's existence, makes Da-sein understand that it has a limited amount of time to be the person it can be, which urges it to consider all possibilities of its being and make its own decision about how to live its own life. In this way, death discloses all

possibilities of Da-sein's being. Sartre, since he thinks that death is an absurd event that does not disclose any meaning, does not confer any interpretative importance to death in self-constitution.

(6.2) Critique of Subjectivity

Heidegger's conception of Da-sein goes far beyond rationalist, empiricist and religious understandings of self. *First*, understanding self (as rationalists argue) as a substance that has predetermined properties and a fixed given nature objectifies human existence and presents a rather dogmatic definition or characterization of human being. In this view, there is no place for self-constituting for the nature and properties of human self as a substance are already certain. This approach also denies the historicity of human essence. Since the human nature is fixed and is not contingent with respect to time, the essence of human existence remains unaltered in the course of history. *Second*, it is a distortive reduction to define human self, as empiricists do, merely as a perceiving being or a bundle of perceptions that holds one's perceptions together, organizes and produces ideas out of the impressions. It must be noted that this position drops the rationalist thesis that self is a substance that is loaded with inborn ideas and characteristics, and holds that there is no self as substance prior to experience. It nonetheless holds a version of subjectivist perspective by assuming that human self is the subject that perceives and represents the world and is the producer of ideas. The world exists by virtue of the fact that there is a self that perceives it as world. All we possess are impressions and ideas that we have in our mind and, therefore, we cannot be certain of the existence of the outer world. Empiricists do not give an account of any structure of human existence that enables us to perceive the world in the way we do. They simply accept that we have perceptions and do not ever dwell on the issue of the conditions of the phenomenon of perception. *Third*, conceiving self as purely and simply a creation of God seems like a highly deterministic view, according to which human nature is determined and given to

humans by God. From Heidegger's point of view, whatever the relation between God and the self is, self is self-constituting and is *not* simply and purely made by God.

Heidegger not only criticizes these approaches, but also and more importantly provides an alternative to their metaphysical frameworks. Hence, if his ontological assumptions and claims are acceptable, then his views on the essence of the self, significance of death, and his critique of other philosophical theses are also arguably tenable. If one is going to criticize and reject his particular claims, one seemingly has to first object to certain aspects of his ontological analysis.

In *BT* one of Heidegger's main concerns is to raise a critique of the subjectivist view.²⁴ In this view, human self is conceived as a worldless human subject that is at the center of the universe, making sense of the beings, events and the world as a whole. The first thing one can be certain of, as Descartes thought, is one's own existence, as opposed to that of the external world—for there is the possibility that everything I perceive is only my perceptions and nothing more; perhaps beings exist only in my perception and not independently from it. According to the subjectivist view (as Sartre also adopts), the subject is a self-sufficient being who is the ground of all meaning and knowledge. The relation between self and world is characterized as that between the internal and external (or ego and non-ego) and subject is understood as the sole source of meaning. Heidegger finds this approach rather problematic and attributes great importance to the existential analysis of *Da-sein* as an alternative ontology to subjectivist conception.

In contrast, as we have seen, Heidegger's ontology of *Da-sein* conceives human self as thrown into the world, existing with others and other beings, that is, always already in interaction with them. We find ourselves in a world which is already in the process of an ongoing historical change, and where significance has been constituted prior to our existence. We learn from other people how to make use of the tools and the objects around us, to take care of ourselves, and make sense of the world and survive in it. That is to say, in fact we are not at the center of the world but

²⁴ Here I will only give a general explication of the basic assumptions underlying the subjectivist tenets. I do not, of course, assume that all subjectivist thinkers accept the claims to be mentioned in the same way.

in the midst of the world. Meaning and understanding are possible only in self's interaction with beings and other people, and in a structure of significance. Meaning and understanding are possible only because we are in the world and constitute our selves in and through our relation with other beings and persons. As Heidegger argues, we cannot confer any and every meaning we want on the beings or events. This also means we encounter some resistance if we try to confer any meaning we want on beings and make use of them in accordance with this "mis-understanding"—like trying to fit my left glove to my right hand. Even though what we call world is possible only because Da-sein exists, still, beings are independently from Da-sein's existence. What Da-sein in fact does is to learn to live among/with beings.

Da-sein is not a subject, rather, its being is circular. It has a prior understanding or "knowledge" of the world, and as it has more experience and has a better understanding of the world, it reflects on its new experiences from where it formerly stands, and vice versa. So, what Da-sein basically does is constantly interpreting and re-interpreting the being of beings—for Da-sein's being is not a linear advance or improvement, but having a better and multi-dimensional understanding of the world and therefore of itself. In this way, Da-sein discovers the new possibilities of its being that have lay hidden. As a matter of fact, this is the way a child learns about life. A child does not accumulate knowledge of the world in a simply linear fashion, starting from the scratch and accumulating information. She learns new things, and by adding new knowledge to her previous epistemic repertoire and reinterpreting what she already knows in the light of the new piece of information, she makes new inferences about the world and in this way improves her understanding. She sees the connections between different practices, events, rules, regulations, and by and through this interpretative act she puts all these separate pieces into a meaningful whole. This interpretation is not just a cognitive, or intellectual act; it also shapes and determines and is shaped and determined in turn by her deeds and practices. Thus, to be a human being is to constantly interpret and re-interpret the world and one's own being. This is an ongoing process that comes to an end only in the end of one's life.

Since humans lose the ability to interpret the world in death, actually they lose their very being what marks their distinction from all other beings. This interpretative action is not an intellectual practice which is the privilege of "some" people, rather, all Da-seins are essentially interpretative. Yet, Da-sein can be an authentic self only if it interprets the world in an authentic way, i.e., by reflecting on the possibilities of its being, making its own decisions and choices, and developing its own perspective to see the world in its own eyes—not as it is imposed on it by others. An authentic self realizes itself as the possibilities of its own being, as what it can be, therefore, as more than what it is in the present moment—and it projects itself on the authentic possibilities of its being. There is no rule for how to be one's own self, nor is there a list of its contents. For it is not about the content of Da-sein's being or actions, but about the way it interprets being, makes choices and projects its future.

As Da-sein becomes aware of the limits of its existence and discloses its situation, the way it understands and interprets its own being also changes. An awareness of the limits of its existence enters into its selfhood and changes its self-understanding and self-interpretation—with such an awareness, the way it makes sense of the world, its own being changes, for it interprets its prior understanding and knowledge of world and its self-knowledge in light of this awareness. Death, as the ultimate limit of one's existence, is also a possibility of meaning—awareness of which discloses to Da-sein the finitude of its being, all possibilities of its being, the need to appropriate its possibilities of being and to project its future on its authentic possibilities. Death, authentically understood, is not just an event that we observe in the world, but it is "my death" which is a "having-been," my ownmost possibility that accompanies every moment of my worldly existence. And it is an awareness of this limit what enables Da-sein to understand the finitude of its being and change the way it interprets and makes sense of its existence. In this respect, Da-sein's awareness (or unawareness) of its own death and finitude of its own being are essentially and inevitably related to the act of self-constitution.

Heidegger does not answer the question of being in *BT*. He poses the question and states that an ontological existential analysis of Da-sein will provide a preliminary analysis. He does not identify being with Da-sein's understanding of being of beings but it seems that an understanding of being of beings and being are internally related—for we encounter and understand being only as being of beings. Yet, since Heidegger thinks that interpretation moves in a circle, and since he clearly puts in the beginning of *BT* that the aim of *BT* is to provide an interpretation of being as it appears in an through Da-sein, we can presume that there will not be an end to interpretation. Rather, in this circle of interpretation, each and every step will elaborate the former interpretation and will open new possibilities of meaning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anders, Günther. *Franz Kafka*. Tr. A. Steer and A. K. Thorlby. New York: Hillary House Publishers Ltd., 1960.
- Caputo, John. "The Question of Being and Transcendental Phenomenology: Reflections on Heidegger's Relationship to Husserl." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 84-105.
- Cohen, Richard A. "Da-sein's Responsibility for Being," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 27, Winter 1983, 317-325.
- Dostal, Robert J. "The Problem of 'Indifferenz' in *Sein und Zeit*." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. xliii, no.1, September 1982, 43-58.
- Edwards, Paul. "Heidegger and Death as 'Possibility.'" *Mind*, vol. lxxxiv, no.336, October 1975, 548-566.
- . "Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique." *The Monist*, April, 1976, vol. 59, no.2, 161-186.
- Emrich, Wilhelm. *Franz Kafka: A Critical Study of His Writings*. Tr. Sheema Zeben Buehne. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1968.
- Fackenheim, Emil L. *Metaphysics and Historicity*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961.
- . *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973.
- Gray, Glenn. "The Idea of Death in Existentialism." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. xlviii, no. 5, 113-127.
- Guignon, Charles. "Philosophy and Authenticity: Heidegger's Search for a Ground for Philosophizing." In *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Volume 1. Eds. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 2000, 79-101.
- Haar, Michel. "Sartre and Heidegger." In *Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*. Eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1980, 168-187.
- . *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*. Tr. William McNeill. State University of

New York Press, 1993.

Harries, Karsten. "Death and Utopia: Towards a Critique of the Ethics of Satisfaction." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 139-152.

Haugeland, John. "Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism." In *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Volume 1. Eds. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 2000, 43-77.

Heidegger, Martin. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Tr. James S. Churchill. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

———. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. Tr. Michael Heim. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.

———. *Being and Time*. Tr. J. Stambaugh. State University of New York Press, 1996.

———. "On the Essence of Ground." In *Pathmarks*. Ed. William McNeill. Cambridge University Press, 1998, 97-135.

———. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Tr. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

Hoffman, Piotr. "Death, Time, History: Division II of *Being and Time*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*. Ed. Charles Guignon. Cambridge University Press, 1993, 195-214.

Inwood, Michael. *Heidegger*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Jaspers, Karl. *Philosophy*, Volume 2. "Part III: Existenz as Unconditionality in Situation, Consciousness, and Action." Tr. E.B. Ashton. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1968.

Keyes, C.D. "An Evaluation of Levinas' Critique of Heidegger." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. ii, 1972, 121-142.

Kockelmans, Joseph J. "Destructive Retrieve and Hermeneutic Phenomenology in *Being and Time*." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 106-137.

Kraus, Peter. "Death and Metaphysics: Heidegger on Nothingness and the Meaning of

- Being." In *Death and Philosophy*. Eds. Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 98-111.
- Krell, David Farrell. "Schlag der Liebe, Schlag des Todes: On a Theme in Heidegger and Trakl." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 238-258.
- Leonard, Linda. "The Belonging-Together of Poetry and Death." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 19, Summer 1975, 137-145.
- Llewelyn, John. "The 'Possibility' of Heidegger's Death." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, vol. 14, no.2, May 1983, 127-138.
- Lopston, Peter. "Antinomy of Death." In *Death and Philosophy*. Eds. Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 135-151.
- MacAvoy, Leslie. "The Heideggerian Bias Toward Death: A Critique of the Role of Being-Towards-Death in the Disclosure of Human Finitude." *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 27, nos. 1&2, January, April 1996, 63-77.
- Magurshak, Dan. "Heidegger and Edwards on *Sein-Zum-Tode*." *The Monist*, vol. 62, 1979, 107-118.
- Malpas, Jeff. "Death and the Unity of Life." In *Death and Philosophy*. Eds. Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 120-134.
- Maly, Kenneth. "To Re-Awaken The Matter of Being." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 282-298.
- Mulhall, Stephen. *Heidegger and Being and Time*. Routledge, 1996.
- O'Mahony, Brendan. "Martin Heidegger's Existential Analysis of Death." *Philosophical Studies*, vol. xviii, 1969, 58-75.
- Parkes, Graham. "Death and Detachment: Montaigne, Zen, Heidegger and the Rest." In *Death and Philosophy*. Eds. Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 83-97.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "The Critique of Subjectivity and Cogito in the Philosophy of Heidegger." In *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*. Ed. Manfred S. Frings. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968.
- Roberts, Julian. "Heidegger." In *German Philosophy: An Introduction*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: International Inc., 1988, 255-269.

- Sallis, John. "The Origins of Heidegger's Thought." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 43-57.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Existentialism is A Humanism." In *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Ed. and tr. Walter Kaufmann. New York: World Publishing, 1972, 287-311.
- Scott, Charles E. "Daseinanalysis: An Interpretation." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 19, Summer, 1975, 43-57.
- Seifert, Arndt. "A Theory of Projects: Its Application to Death and Suicide." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, December 1978, vol. 39, no.2, 208-217.
- Silverman, Hugh J. "Man and Self as Identity of Difference." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 19, Summer 1975, 131-136.
- Slote, Michael A. "Existentialism and the Fear of Dying." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 1, January 1975, 17-28.
- Solomon, Robert C. "Death Fetishism, Morbid Solipsism." In *Death and Philosophy*. Eds. Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 152-176.
- Stambaugh, Joan. "An Inquiry Into Authenticity and Inauthenticity in *Being and Time*." *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. vii, 1977, 153-161.
- Stern, David G. "Heidegger and Wittgenstein on the Subject of Kantian Philosophy." In *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy*. Eds. David E. Klemm and Günter Zöller. State University of New York Press, 1997, 245-259.
- Sussman, Henry. *The Trial: Kafka's Unholy Trinity*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993.
- Tolstoy, Leo. "The Death of Ivan Ilych." Tr. Aylmer Maude. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories*. New York and Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library, 95-156.
- White, Carol J. "Da-sein, Existence and Death." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 28, 1984, 52-65.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. New York: Horcourt, Brace and Company. Inc., 1922.

_____. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.

Young Julian. "Death and Authenticity." In *Death and Philosophy*. Eds. Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 112-119.

Zimmerman, Michael E. "A Door to a New Way of Thinking: The Beginning of Being and Time." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 19, Summer 1975, 100-107.